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# *John Stuart Blackie*

Anna M. Stoddart

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**JOHN STUART BLACKIE**



**Ἀληθείων ἐν ἀγάπῃ**





*John Ruskin*

JOHN STUART BLACKBURN

AND  
HIS  
CONTEMPORARIES

ANNA DODD

EDITED BY

IN TWO VOLUMES

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*A BIOGRAPHY*

BY

ANNA M. STODDART

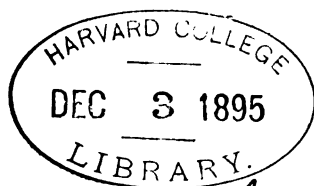
*WITH AN ETCHING AND TWO PHOTOGRAVURES*

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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## P R E F A C E.

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## CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

---

### CHAPTER I.

#### PARENTAGE AND CHILDHOOD.

1809-1819.

	PAGE
A Stuart race of doctors—An old Border family—A line of Naismiths—Childish sports—His first school—A wilful boy—His mother's death . . . . .	1

### CHAPTER II.

#### AT SCHOOL AND COLLEGE.

1820-1829.

Early patriotic proclivities—At Marischal College—Apprenticeship to the Law—A solemn period—Decision for the ministry—At Edinburgh University—Amateur "slum" work—Record in Moral Philosophy class—A young neophyte—Moderates and Evangelicals—His renown as a Latinist—A leader of the Moderates—A turning-point—Studies in nature . . . . .	16
---	----

# CHAPTER III.

## STUDENT LIFE IN GÖTTINGEN.

1829.

Mental difficulties—Womanly misgivings—A stormy voyage —Jolly German students—Beer and tobacco—Professor Heeren—Professor Saalfeld—A German Sunday—German socialities—A walking tour—Visit to Luther's birthplace —Luther and Goethe . . . . .	44
--	----

# CHAPTER IV.

## STUDENT LIFE IN BERLIN.

1829-1830.

Feelings of loneliness—Professor Neander—Professor Raumer —Studies in English pronunciation—Widening views of life—The mental transition—Growing distaste for the Church—A proposed presentation at Court—Projected journey to Italy—Results of German residence . . . . .	69
--	----

# CHAPTER V.

## ROME.

1830-1831.

Leave-takings—Pickpockets in church—Interest in Italian art—Outburst against Roman Catholicism—Desires for classical study—A prisoner on parole—At Naples—Visit to Tivoli—More police difficulties—Satire on Catholicism —A religious transition—Christmas Eve with the Bunsen —Study of modern Greek—Longings for Greek travel— Letter from Chevalier Bunsen—An archæological paper —Farewell to the Eternal City . . . . .	90
---	----

## CHAPTER VI.

END OF *WANDERJAHRE*.

1831-1832.

- On tramp through Italy—Arrival at Bonn—In London—Outcome of German residence—Decides for the Bar—Scotland's greatest Greek scholar—Lord Brougham at Aberdeen . . . . . 124

## CHAPTER VII.

## YEARS OF STRUGGLE.

1832-1837.

- Dislike for the Law—Merry supper-parties—Translation of 'Faust'—Carlyle's verdict on the translation—Reception of the translation—Estimate of Wordsworth—The Speculative Society—The Juridical Society—Literary contributions—Cultivating philosophic calm—"Sociality and activity"—Scottish walking tours . . . . . 139

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE TEST ACTS.

1837-1840.

- A tender friendship—Greek metre and music—Doubts as to fitness for Law—Appointment to Aberdeen Latin Chair—The Westminster Confession—Making a declaration—A clerical hornet's nest—Letter in explanation and defence—Presbyterial reception of the letter—The case in Court—Again in Edinburgh—Correspondence with Miss Wyld—A fantastic dress . . . . . 167

## CHAPTER IX.

## INSTALLATION AND MARRIAGE.

1841-1842.

- A love episode—Disillusionment—The two loves—Parental opposition—First lecture as professor—The new Humanity Chair—Brightening prospects—Discipline in the class-room—First popular lecture—A bridal song—The “Benedicite”—In summer quarters . . . . . 196

## CHAPTER X.

## ABERDEEN AND UNIVERSITY REFORM.

1842-1850.

- Domestic administration—Fresh religious difficulties—Waiting for the truth—At the Free Church Assembly—Education in Scotland—Letter from Dr Chalmers—Marischal and King’s Colleges—University teaching of classics—A stirring appeal—First Highland tour—An evening with Carlyle—At Oxford—Carlyle on ‘Æschylus’—Plan for publishing ‘Æschylus’—Rhymed choruses . . . . . 220

## CHAPTER XI.

## ‘ÆSCHYLUS’ AND THE GREEK CHAIR.

1850-1852.

- Aim of the Greek translation—Irregular and regular rhyme—Students’ reading-parties—The Hellenic Society—The British Association in Edinburgh—Methods of learning languages—An early educational reformer—Again in Germany—The Greek Chair at Edinburgh—Professor Blackie’s candidature—Disappearance of prejudices—The Greek Chair won—Sectarian opposition—Notes of gratitude . . . . . 250

## CHAPTER XII.

## EDINBURGH.

1852-1857.

- Parting gifts and regrets—Edinburgh in 1852—The pronunciation of Greek—Departure for Greece—In Athens—Life in Athens—A drought of rhyme—The Greek assistant lecturer—Work of the Greek classes—Success of the Greek classes—Lectures at the Philosophical Institution—Summer quarters at Bonn—Dr Guthrie's discourses—The "Blackie Brotherhood" . . . . . 280

## CHAPTER XIII.

## LAYS, LECTURES, AND LYRICS.

1857-1860.

- The "Braemar Ballads"—Professor Gerhard—'On Beauty'—Visit to Cambridge—Miss Janet Chambers—Sydney Dobell on Garibaldi—The British Association at Aberdeen—The 'Lyrical Poems'—First meeting with Mr Gladstone—Lord John Russell—The home in Hill Street—Social entertainments—Changes in family circle . . . . . 308



# ILLUSTRATIONS.

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## VOLUME I.

JOHN STUART BLACKIE . . . . . *Frontispiece*  
*After the painting by Sir George Reid, P.R.S.A.*

## VOLUME II.

MRS BLACKIE . . . . . *Frontispiece*  
*From a photograph by Alexander Ayton.*

ALTNACRAIG . . . . . *To face p. 196*  
*From a water-colour painting by Sam Bough, R.S.A.*

# JOHN STUART BLACKIE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### PARENTAGE AND CHILDHOOD.

1809-1819.

IN England the middle classes can rarely boast of connection with a romantic past. Their progenitors may have been worthy, capable, useful in their day and generation, but how seldom have they left traditions stranded on the flats of present provincialism. Whatever their local worth, the grandfathers of a middle-class Englishman inspired no ballad, as warriors on the moorland in the wake of a ruined dynasty—as martyrs in the lowland singing the psalms of the Covenant while Episcopal bullets whizzed about their ears. In Scotland, the blue blood

VOL. I.

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of a squandered loyalty, of a faithfulness unto death, whatever the cause, fills the veins of the middle classes. Their ancestors were Jacobites or Covenanters, and so, even unto this generation, men are to be found inheriting their strong individuality, refusing the dull canals of conventional life, and working their way in self-worn channels, through obstacles as unrelenting as their granite rocks.

Perhaps for lack of "causes" the Scotchmen of to-day are growing tame, but the men born within the first quarter of this century were still endowed with free gesture and plain speech, and through their hearts ran rills of poetry from the springs of ancestral suffering.

From a stock of solid Borderers John Stuart Blackie took his name and something of his nature. He says himself:—

I desire to thank God for the good stock-in-trade, so to speak, which I inherited from my parents for the business of life. My father was a man of great vigour both mental and bodily, made mainly for action and enjoyment, but with a discursive habit of thought, a turn for philosophical speculation, and freedom from all narrow ideas. He had great sagacity and knowledge of the world. My mother died when I was ten years old, and I remember her only as everything that was womanly and motherly. I have no doubt I owe much of what is best in my moral and emotional nature to her.

His great-grandfather was a native of Kelso in

Roxburghshire, and cultivated a strip of ground, his own property, which stretched between the Tweed and the high-road on the eastern outskirts of the town. He married the daughter of Mr Stevenson, who lived at Galalaw, an extensive farm tenanted by himself and his forebears for a century and a half. Three sons and three daughters grew up in the Tweedside home, and found callings and husbands within Kelso and its neighbourhood. The eldest took to business, and became a wine-merchant in the town. A much-respected family of Stuarts was resident in Kelso. Father and son were doctors, and were descended from a line of doctors. An old lady of the family used to say that thirty-two Stuarts of her race were doctors. A current of Highland blood ran in their veins, they could relate exploits of Jacobite forefathers, and they held their heads high. The Dr Stuart of something more than a century ago was assisted by his son Archibald, and had a daughter called Alison. Some kinship existed between them and the Blackies, and the wine-merchant fell in love with his cousin. Old Dr Stuart forbade the marriage, but the lovers braved his ire and made a runaway match. Their married life was shadowed by straitened circumstances, and by estrangement from disapproving relatives; but Mr Blackie died, and as Dr Archibald Stuart had succeeded to his

father, also dead, he offered a home to his widowed sister and her two children. The widow soon died, but Dr Stuart brought up the little Alexander and his sister with his own children.

Alexander was clever, and took kindly to Latin at the Kelso Grammar-School, whose boys played under the shadow of King David's stately abbey. He was possessed of fitful energy, and took interest in many matters, in antiquities and gardening as well as in his lessons. His cousin John, the doctor's son, was his companion and playmate; but although gifted with a vein of caustic humour, and of sterling rectitude and ability, he was sober-sided compared to the mercurial Sandy.

When school-days were at an end, Dr Stuart found an opening for his nephew in a Glasgow house of business, and he was despatched thither to learn the mysteries of manufacture, although tradition tells not in what kind. But his temperament recoiled from the unrelieved drudgery, and he accepted a situation in the Commercial Bank, where shorter toil left him leisure for other pursuits, and where he acquitted himself so well that he was made an agent before he was twenty years old. Stern Presbyterianism prevailed both in the Stuart household and in that of his Blackie cousins, who were useful

Kelsonians and growing in consideration amongst their fellows. But the wilful Sandy had moulted some feathers of that sober plumage, and vexed his cousins with bold questioning of the minor observances and with untoward whistling on the Sabbath day. These signs of licence ruffled somewhat the peace of his holiday visits to the Blackies, but they were ready to grant that he was a pleasant fellow and did them otherwise no discredit.

Having reached a modest position, it is not wonderful to find that he promptly took to himself a wife. The lady was Miss Helen Stodart, and she was twenty-two years old when Mr Blackie married her in 1805. She was the eldest of three sisters, and the daughter of Mr William Stodart, an architect at Hamilton, who designed two of the bridges over the Clyde, one at Glasgow and one near Hamilton. This Mr Stodart was descended from a branch of the Border family of Stouthart, which had settled in Lanarkshire early in the seventeenth century. Its kinship with the Selkirkshire branch is evidenced by the singular likeness between the descendants of both branches—a likeness maintained in mental and moral characteristics, as well as in stature, complexion, and other physical features, to this day.

A succession of Stodarts, christened James,

occupied the Lanarkshire property of Loanhead for nearly a century. The James of 1740 or thereabouts sold Loanhead and settled at Walston in the Upper Ward of Lanarkshire. The eldest of his seven sons rivalled his kinsman, "the Beetle of Yarrow," in size and strength, and was known as "King of Covington," where stood his farm. It was at Covington that Burns supped and slept on his memorable journey to Edinburgh, and on the following morning he breakfasted with James Stodart, another of the seven brothers, proceeding to Carnwath, where he lunched with John Stodart, the banker there. William was the second of these brothers. He was born in 1740, and in 1782 married Christian Naismith, whose forefathers deserve a word of chronicle.

Two staunch Covenanters head the roll, James and John Naismith. The former was minister first of Dalmellington, and then of Hamilton, from 1641 to 1662. He was a man of note, trusted by the Scots Parliament for various duties, and, says Wodrow, "he was reckoned a very good man and a good preacher." He proved himself of sterling gold in the furnace of persecution, for he was thrown into prison in 1660, the year of the Restoration, one of the first to suffer for the Covenant. Persecuted for a time, he was at

length driven from his charge ; but so far as we know, both he and his brother John, in spite of twenty-eight troubled years, lived to a good old age. John too suffered imprisonment, although not until the reign of James II., and both were harassed by repeated fines. A daughter of the Reverend James Naismith married her cousin, who was John Naismith's son, and this couple, John and Janet Naismith, lived at Allanton, and brought up in godly fashion, and in the memory of grandparents of such honourable record, a son, John Naismith, afterwards of Drumloch. He married in 1731, and his family consisted of a son and three daughters, of whom the youngest was the Christian Naismith of our story. Mr William Stodart died a few years after his marriage, and his wife survived him for only a short time. When she died, their little girls, Helen, Marion, and Margaret, were adopted by relatives on both sides. The uncle Naismith took Helen, an aunt married to Mr Hamilton of Airbles gave Marion a home, and Mr Stodart welcomed the little Margaret to Walston. The Drumloch house was hospitable, and there the sisters often met. Helen, the eldest, grew up in the congenial atmosphere, a tall and graceful girl, dark-haired and dark-eyed, her face beaming with kindly smiles, a great reader and a cheerful talker. An old



servant described her as "a pairfit sant." But although of orderly habits, she was not fond of dress, and rather eschewed society, which interfered with her reading and distracted her thoughts. Her uncle was a man of ability, loving Greek, Latin, and French, and having some taste for research. He was able to help Sir John Sinclair in 'The Statistical Account of Scotland,' and wrote several books himself. We are told that, like his forefathers, he was a man of goodly presence.

From time to time Helen went to Airbles to visit her aunt and sister, and there, amongst the occasional guests, she met Alexander Blackie. He contrived to make himself agreeable to the gentle Helen, and an attachment grew up between them. The young banker was handsome, well-built, self-confident, and so far successful. The touches of dogmatism which mark the manner of youth offend only the old, and if to these he added some flashes of quick temper, the uncles and aunts alone took warning. So in 1805 the young people were married, and took up house in Charlotte Street, in Glasgow. Here in 1807 their eldest daughter, Christina, was born, and on July 28, 1809, their eldest son, John Stuart Blackie. Friends gathered to his christening, and amongst them was the cousin from

Kelso, now a young doctor, assisting his father, and in due time to succeed him—and after him the baby was christened John Stuart. Some homage, too, was doubtless paid to the memory of a line of Naismiths, from John the Covenanter to John the scholarly Laird of Drumloch.

Soon after the christening, Mr Blackie was appointed manager of the Commercial Bank at Aberdeen, and thither they removed and settled in Marischal Street about the close of 1809. As John grew from infancy to childhood the banker's nursery filled, but only five of his first family reached maturity.

From his earliest years John developed from within outwards, accepting no guidance of a coercive character, and flatly declining to be taught the alphabet until he affected letters. His father made many futile attempts, but he refused to be wiled from the attic, where he and his sisters revelled in improvised sports, sometimes theatrical, often oratorical. He filled the house with noise, a kindly, merry child, much liked by his nurses, whom he harangued from the top of a chest of drawers. His father was fond of Shakespeare, and John picked up scraps by ear, and declaimed them in the nursery with abundant gesture. But the psalms and hymns carefully administered on Sundays found less response,

until the metrical version of the nineteenth psalm pleased his ear, and he learnt it by heart. This seems to have been the only mental feat which he performed in his childhood. But already his character showed its bent, and his mother wrote when he was about eight years old—

John is all consideration. He is possessed of a good deal of the milk of human kindness. He is rapid in all his movements and methodical to a fault. Nothing that can be done to-day is put off till to-morrow. He is now happy in the present, anything new rather vexes than delights him. His character will depend much on the society he forms in after-life.

And she adds, her perspicuity something clouded by her failures on Sundays,—

If it is good, I expect to see him a fine young man, pushing, and fond of money, but not with much religion about him.

At this time he did not know his alphabet, and a lady experienced in teaching was asked to beguile him through this displeasing portal into the halls of learning. She thought to teach him with a box of ivory letters, and arranged them as toys full of promise; but John flung them out of the window, and declined to be fooled into lessons.

In the same year, however, a new school was opened in Aberdeen. Professional society had

grown to be dissatisfied with the grammar-school, and took some trouble to establish an academy, at which the mind might be cultivated and the manners not neglected. Mr Blackie was one of the gentlemen interested. They rented a hall in the Netherkirkgate, and fitted it up with all school requirements. An excellent master was secured in Mr Peter Merson, a classical student then mounting the slow rungs of Church preferment, and a Mr Bransby was engaged as usher.

John was sent to this school, and came first under Mr Bransby's care. The discovery that his schoolmates could read and write was sufficient shock, and he was soon diligent enough. Mr Bransby died a few months later, and John was transferred to Mr Merson's class. Here he was expected to begin Latin, and refused to do so. Mr Merson understood the boy, and left him to take to it spontaneously, from which point he made rapid progress in his school-work. Some twelve or fourteen boys were in his class, and in the *viva voce* examinations with which the master began each morning's work, young Blackie soon distinguished himself. His memory was strong from the beginning, and he gained smartness by doing his lessons aloud, in his own fashion, learning Latin by the ear as well as by the mind. "Merson's scholars" were a trial to the

neighbourhood, as the Academy had no playground; but although John could run and shout with the best of them, he seems to have avoided all rougher pranks. Once he was challenged to fight by Alick Dunbar, but he declined on the ground that human beings were not intended to collar each other like dogs, adding, "Although I won't fight with you, I'll knock you down," and this he did to the admiration of his school-fellows, who counted his courage duly proven. A first acquaintance with the heroes of tradition and of history impressed him greatly. At nine years of age he accepted the postulate of the future apostle of strength, and went about the house shouting, "Father, for the nine hundred and ninety-ninth time, I tell you there is nothing like uncommon strength."

Mr Blackie, elated by his rapid progress, wished him to learn music and dancing about the time that Latin had lost its terrors. A teacher of music was instructed to give John lessons in the violin, but the little scholar's arms and hands were not adaptable, and he protested so vigorously against his lessons that they came to an untimely end. Nor did dancing suit the free play of his feet and legs, and when the weekly lesson was due, John was wont to hide himself and so escape its tortures. On one occasion Mr

Blackie dragged him out of a cupboard, and marched him off to the dancing-school, holding a cane in reserve for the first sign of mutiny; but this took time and trouble, and the father had to give in, and to content himself with the fact that John was generally dux at the Academy. Mr Blackie was particular about dress, and John was not. A smart suit of silver-grey cloth with rows of shining buttons was chosen for him, but caused a tempest of despair in the boy, who refused to brave the jeers of his class in such unacademical splendour, and the fine clothes had to be kept for James. So he grew as much as possible in the free exercise of his own will; and in spite of his repugnance to his father's dilettante tastes, his truthfulness, kindliness, industry, and sunny humour made him the favourite at home.

He was no reader at this time. He learned his lessons thoroughly, singing them through the house, and already marching up and down with that coincidence of mental and bodily activity which never left him; but when he knew them, the hours to spare were filled with original sports. The attic, where he and the little ones were at liberty, was decorated with play-bills,—his fancy elaborated their suggestions, and he wove in what scraps of Shakespeare and psalmody he knew, de-

vising strange plays, which he and his sister performed to an audience of nurses and children. Christina was John's most capable playmate. Opposite the house stood a theatre, and every evening these two watched the people going in, with wistful eyes, wondering if it would ever occur to their father to take them to the play, but not venturing to expose their longing to his banter. He never did take them, but sent them to the circus sometimes, and the feats of riders and clowns led to hazardous imitations at home.

Mrs Blackie's cousin had married Mr James Wyld, afterwards of Gilston, and then residing at Bonnington Bank, near Edinburgh. In 1819, John, just ten years old, was invited to spend the August holidays with his cousin Robert Wyld, a year older than himself. Robert was in low spirits at the prospect of going to the High School after the holidays. He hated Latin, and, alas! Latin and Greek, with a little arithmetic and small doses of the weights and measures, made up the too solid educational diet of that famous place. Mr Wyld tried to rouse his boy's emulation by praising John Blackie's ardour for Latin, but Robert refused to believe in it, till one day, hearing strange sounds which came through the open library window into the garden, he peered in to find his cousin, a thin little lad

with sharp features, shouting out at the top of his voice, with the broad sonorous vowel-sounds taught in Scotland, the rules of syntax from the Latin columns in Ruddiman's 'Rudiments.' To be so employed on a holiday visit argued a power of principle which impressed the dejected Robert for his good.

This year, 1819, ended in sorrow for the home in Aberdeen. The gentle mother died, and a shadow fell on the house, which it took years to remove.



## CHAPTER II.

## AT SCHOOL AND COLLEGE.

1820-1829.

I MIGHT wish to retain for ever the mixed elements of youth and manhood that belong to middle age,—to the season between twenty and forty,—but I never could seriously desire to have been eternally a boy. A boy is a fruitful thing for a thoughtful spectator to contemplate, but a somewhat barren and a very imperfect thing to be. However, I was quite happy in my boyhood in the measure that happiness belongs to that age, and have not a single memorial sorrow to recall. At school I got my lessons carefully, kept at the top of my class, or quite close to it, and enjoyed peg-tops, marbles, “Robbers and Rangers,” and other sports in their season, with that healthy gusto that belongs to all normally constituted British boys. I got my lessons carefully, but I cannot say that this proceeded from any particular love either of books or lessons. I imagine it was merely from the natural energy of my character, with an ambitious impulse that did not like to be last, where there was a fair chance of being first. I was put into a little world—the school—where action was the law, and it was contrary to my nature

to be lazy or to be last. I was called upon to act for honour and glory with my equals, and I did my best with decision. That was the whole secret of my school activity.

So wrote the Professor when his hair was white, and, to some extent, his retrospective estimate of the ten years' old schoolboy may have weight with us. But already feathery-winged seeds of this and that great influence had floated within reach of his receptive nature, and had found lodgment there, to sink deep and to grow strong. Within the gable of a house just below the schoolroom in Netherkirkgate was a statue of William Wallace. John looked out on it daily—looked up to it as he came and went from school. The Scottish hero and his story grew into his heart, the biggest lesson he received at Merson's Academy. It was the nucleus from which radiated all his interest in Scotland and her history. Wallace led easily to Bruce; and his knowledge of both was stimulated by his excursions with Mr Blackie, who took the boy with him on his holidays to fish near Kintore or at Pitmedden, in the Don, the Deveron, or the Urie. The memory of Bruce clung to castle and cottage in these districts, and Mr Blackie found eager audience for his tales of the national champions. To be where Bruce had been, to look on Wallace day after day, brought both quite close

to John's imagination, which, indeed, they filled for a time. Scotland began to be a holy land for him. Books which told of her trials and resistance grew valuable, and we find him, as the years passed, liking books better, and in his leisure hours poring over Walter Scott's matchless stories, many of which had come out, and over Robert Burns's glorious lyrics. The latter he first learned from his father. Mr Blackie's many gifts included a rich and musical voice; he sang the old Scottish ballads dear to our fathers, and every beautiful song by Robert Burns which had found a native setting. Scottish song and Scottish story took possession of the boy's heart before he left Merson's Academy.

When this happened he was twelve years old. Mr Merson taught well, and John's equipment of Latin enabled him to win a small bursary on his entry at Marischal College, which he resigned in favour of a poorer student. But the grammar-schools and private academies of that time considered the elements of Greek as no part of their curriculum, and schoolboys crowded the classes of the University, whose professors were expected to do mere usher's work for some eighty or ninety students, whose age and acquirements made the title a mockery.

John was overpowered by the transition from

a class of twelve to a class of ninety. It was easy to make head against the smaller number in the little Academy, where the capacity of each boy could be quickly gauged ; but the resources of ninety were less obvious, and amongst them were many well-furnished scholars from the Burgh Grammar-School, famous for its teaching of Latin, and naturally better qualified to give its pupils the self-assertion needed for contest with numbers. For three years he went to the College, learning his lessons at home carefully, but without any ambitious dream of excelling the rest of his class-mates.

Greek, indeed, was scarcely taught in a manner to excite ambition ; it was plodding work, and the boy plodded conscientiously and modestly. The Natural Philosophy class, taught attractively by Dr Knight, stimulated his interest and his courage more effectively, and in the last year of his course he took the third prize for mechanics and mathematics. This was due to the teaching, not to any native inclination towards these studies ; but he scarcely knew as yet what interested him most, and he was glad to learn what was best taught.

For in Aberdeen during the first quarter of this century the teaching was barren enough. Enthusiasm was banished from both chair and pulpit. The professors were learned but pompous ;

the preachers were Moderates, and turned out formal homilies, which passed over listless congregations like gusts of an arid wind over a withered plain—"clats o' cauld parritch," in homely contemporary phrase. Aberdeen was chilled to its centre by Moderatism; it dulled every faculty except those in the service of a dignified self-interest, which the Moderates studiously proclaimed to be common-sense. The boy's three years' curriculum left not a memory behind except this of gaining a prize in mechanics and mathematics.

At home the mother's place was supplied by her sister Marion, and to her kindly care both Mr Blackie and the children owed much. Of the ten children only six had survived—Christina, John, Marion, James, Alexander, and Helen, the last a baby when Mrs Blackie died. Mr Blackie had hardly emerged from the shadow of his loss. He was more solitary than before, and spent his leisure in his study, where he read, and pored over drawers of plaster-of-Paris casts which came from abroad. He fitted up a tiny furnace in his room, and here he fused his metal and turned out clever replicas of his favourite medallions, which he presented to his friends. John's presence was always welcome to him, and the other children were glad when the favourite

was at home, as the father was brighter then and more accessible.

He decided that John should be bred to the law, and found an opening for him in a friend's office in Aberdeen, and in 1824 he began his apprenticeship. It lasted only a few months, and of this short experience we have little record. In a letter to his sister Christina, who was now at an Edinburgh school and spent her holidays with the Tweedside cousins, he says: "I am now made a lawyer totally. I like the occupation *pretty well*, and might like it very well, if I could be sure of getting off at two o'clock." But lawyers' work presents no com-  
plaisant pliability to young apprentices whose minds teem with other interests. To please his father, John would have gone steadily through his probation, had not a change of the most engrossing character come over his whole attitude towards life. This was effected by two events, which struck forcibly at his sensitive apprehension and roused the most vivid and serious realisation. The first was the death of his little brother Alexander, who had been ailing for some time. Four little brothers and sisters had been taken before this, but his reflective powers had not till now reached the stage when the full significance of death could excite and occupy them.

His kindness to the little ones was a household word; he was never known to be cross in the nursery or irritable with one of the children. Sandy was seven years old, and had been a favourite of the big brother of fifteen, and now the large place filled by the household pet was vacant, and it chilled his astonished heart, worsted in death's onslaught. In this loss his affections realised the terrific power of death; another event roused his mind to face the fact and ascertain his own relation towards it.

His father had several friends, wont to spend an evening hour or two in his study, to which John was now admitted on equal terms. Amongst these was a young advocate, a tall and energetic man, full of vitality, brimming over with good spirits and laughter. He went into the country on some business connected with his profession, slept at a little inn in damp sheets, took a chill, and died of rapid consumption, disappearing from his accustomed place with a suddenness which startled John as if a miracle had taken place before his eyes. The man had been the very embodiment of overflowing health. There had been no natural mounting up to full maturity and gradual decadence to death. In the bloom and vigour of early manhood death smote him and laid him low. That old men should die

seemed plain enough; that weakly children should fade from life was grievous, but not mysterious; but that, after all the preparation which youth must undergo to fit the man for life—that, so fitted and equipped, on the very threshold of usefulness and experience, death might leap from an ambuscade and lay him low—that pulled him up from all easy-going acceptance of what to-day and to-morrow had to offer, since the third day might find him face to face with the same dread experience.

His training hitherto had provided him with no foundation of actual creed on which he might have built some jerry philosophy wherein to hide his consciousness of “the terror that walketh by day.” His father was not what is called a religious man; his mother, about whose memory there lingers some sweet perfume of piety, was gone; his aunt was very doctrinal, but a Moderate. The boy had to do the work himself, and had to discover for himself what death was and what life, and in what degree the life that now is stands towards the life that is to come. He became absorbed in his task. There could be no knowledge so important as this, none indeed of any importance except this, and so every other interest fell away. Some religious books adorned the circular table in the parlour of state. They



were such as respectability deemed suitable for the parlour-table, and, except the hand which dusted them, nothing interfered with their recognised functions. Boston's 'Fourfold State,' the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' Blair's 'Sermons,' were part of this parlour furniture, and John seized the staid volumes, and pored over them at every leisure moment. Shakespeare, Scott, and Burns were set aside, and grew to his anxious young eyes mere fascinating fiends bent on luring him from the one thing needful — his soul's salvation. The things of this world became literally mere shadows to him, if not sins. He had begun to take dancing lessons, that he might bear his part at the little social gatherings to which he was invited. He left them off, declined all invitations, refused to go to the theatre, abjured all lighter reading, questioned seriously the need of graver reading, and came to the conclusion that since this world and the things thereof must pass away, it was folly to be occupied with any of its concerns. So even Rollin's 'Ancient History' was discarded as profane study. No Bernard nor Bruno could have set the respective claims of this life and the other in sterner antithesis. For through and through the Calvinistic teaching runs the bitter strain of ingratitude for this wonderful

and blessed life on earth, for its wealth of good and perfect gifts which come to us from the eternal Father. And this bitterness and blindness are a direct inheritance from the monks of the middle ages, when the times were often evil and hid the working of God's providence.

Had he lived before John Knox, he would have settled the problem for himself, as did Bernard and Bruno; but at a time when there was no shuffling off the mundane coil, he could only hope to get himself saved with fear and trembling by bending every faculty towards the contemplation of eternity and its claims. The lawyer's office became intolerable. Sordid motives and dull handling of money were the sum of its inspiration and activity, and he entreated his father to remove him from an atmosphere so noxious to a soul in travail.

We can imagine the surprise with which the clever, kindly father would contemplate a son of his so abnormally affected, and it speaks volumes for his affection that he made no demur, but consented at once that he should study for the ministry, and enter himself as a student at the Edinburgh University, there to complete his course in Arts before beginning his Divinity. No doubt that, with his sanguine temperament, Mr Blackie foresaw a fine career for his gifted son:

his ready utterance, his attainments in natural philosophy, augured well for his success. At that time, too, there were but four constitutional ministers for the forty thousand inhabitants of Aberdeen, and these were pluralists, most of them combining a chair in the University with a pulpit in the town: The calling had its picked places, and John was sure to mount the ladder which led to them.

Perhaps, too, Mr Blackie was now better able to spare his son, for this year he had married again, and his second resembled his first wife in many important qualities, more particularly in cheerfulness and kindness. She was a Mrs Patteson, the widow of an officer in the army, and the daughter of a Mr Miller, a West Indian merchant, who lived in Glasgow. Her mother had been James Watt's daughter, and this influence in her home training had inspired her with a great admiration of talent, whether literary or scientific. She became at once attached to the clever Blackie children, and from the first singled out John for special affection. Not a dissentient voice was raised against her entrance into the family circle, and so great were her tact and amiability that "Aunt Manie" stayed on, an essential member of the family, consulted on all important points by both Mr Blackie and

his wife, and as influential as either with regard to the children. Her step-children were soon as eager for the new mother's affection and approval as if they had been her own. She added certain personal tastes to the heterogeneous "fads" of the household. She collected old china, and had a cabinet for specimens, which bore the proud name of "The Museum."

Early in 1825 John went to Edinburgh, where he was boarded with a family of Tweedside cousins who had settled in Hart Street. They were a widowed Mrs Blackie with two sons, the elder of whom was engaged in journalistic work. Besides these relations, whose home he shared, his father's sister lived in Edinburgh, and made him welcome whenever he cared to go to her home in Lynedoch Place. She had married a Mr Gibson, W.S., with whose family John Gibson Lockhart had some relationship, and her two sons were one a little older and the other a little younger than John Blackie, so that the cousins became readily friends and companions.

John was in his sixteenth year when he applied himself to Greek, Logic, and Moral Philosophy, completing the course in Arts. Dr Ritchie occupied the chair of Logic, which Sir William Hamilton was afterwards to raise to European

fame; and "glorious John Wilson"—"Christopher North"—expounded the principles of Moral Philosophy.

Of the young student's Greek we hear nothing. He was probably still stumbling along the dreary approach to its well-guarded treasures. But we learn that the storms of anxiety which swept over his mind paralysed its free play in the other classes. Despair had seized him, because he felt no firm conviction that he had passed from darkness into light. Some book, presuming to explain all the counsel of God, had fallen into his hands, "insisting, as an indispensable point of Christian experience, that a man should be able to point out a moment in his life when he passed into a new state, as strongly and strikingly as a child does when it emerges from the darkness of the womb into the proud light of the living and winsome world." Of course the worthy Calvinist, so eager to help his fellows into a ditch, forgot that in the human birth the being most concerned is quite unconscious of the change, and that to many the spiritual life comes likewise without observation. For a long time John Blackie was plunged into mental agony because he could not point his finger to a date and say, "On this day and at this hour I was born again." It is remarkable that he took these

perverted glosses for the Gospel. So tremblingly did he seek the narrow way that he turned down every by-path lest he should miss it, and only when one after another led him into the wilderness did he turn back to where he started, to find at last that the lamp of God's Word alone can light the feet along the way of His commandments.

His cousin Archy Gibson was made the confidant of all the turns in this labyrinth. John Blackie seized upon him, and demanded that he too should cast aside every concern which interfered with this the only concern, and Archy was whirled into the vortex of his fervour. The two lads talked together, prayed together, and finally sketched out a course of Bible reading to be carried out simultaneously, whether together or separate. Their reading bade them seek light in service, and it is touching to learn that John, submissive to every mandate, began patiently to visit the sick and miserable in some of the darkest dens of Edinburgh. In and out of the wynds and closes, toiling up to attics in the Cowgate, diving into cellars in the Grassmarket, he spent every leisure hour, seeking God's purpose in regard to him. He was obedient, but not assured; fear and trembling possessed him, but salvation seemed still far off. His scanty

allowance of pocket-money was devoted to the sick and dying, and beside their beds he knelt and prayed, and read the Bible. This was religious work ; and, engaged in this, he awaited the happy moment of his spiritual birth.

But he lagged behind in his classes, and if some temporary relaxation of his mind permitted him to work for his professors, the interval of relief was soon resented as a diabolic interference with his "soul-concern."

Dr Ritchie interested him in spite of himself, and in his first year at the Logic class he wrote an essay on "Conception" which the Professor rated highly. At the close of his second session, when the inner turmoil had begun to abate, he took the third prize in Logic. His experiences at the Moral Philosophy class were more dramatic. That he was not altogether careless of John Wilson's lectures is evidenced by the fact that in a letter to his sister Christina, now at home and eager to enter into his studies and to make them her own, he drew up an excellent abstract of the Professor's teaching, suggesting books for her use, if she cared to pursue the subject. But in this very letter he admits that his work at College seemed to him to be fleeting and shadowy compared with his search for the sure foundation on which to build the structure of his life.

During an interval of intellectual ambition he wrote an essay for Professor Wilson which gained high approbation. When the Professor returned it he said heartily, "A remarkably clever essay, a very clever essay indeed," and for a short time this tribute pleased him; but the very pleasure became a source of pain, and he shirked every opportunity of reviving it. When the session was over, and he went into the Professor's room to ask for his certificate, Christopher North, looking at him fully with his keen blue eyes and leonine grandeur of expression, said, "What has been the matter, Mr Blackie? There is something here that I cannot understand. You gave me in an excellent essay, one of the best I have received this session, and I fully expected to have you on my prize-list; but you have given me only one, and you know my rule." The poor boy burst into tears. How could he tell the truth to that Homeric hero, who would shout with incredulous laughter at the tale? He took his certificate with drooping head, and walked away. The kindly Professor had made the most of that one essay on the card, which remains to this day in record of a time of honest anguish.

In his letters to Mr Blackie he avoids all mention of the subject which so engrossed his time, although he expresses regret for his in-



adequate work at College. His letters are full of details about the wide circle of cousins and half-cousins with whom he came into contact, and who seemed to be getting themselves steadily married or buried. Passages concerning new clothes for either celebration occur, bearing witness to Mr Blackie's care for his son's personal appearance, and to the son's desire to stock his wardrobe scantily, and to be trammelled with no supernumerary coats and hats.

His student life in Edinburgh ended with the summer session of 1826, and Mr Blackie came to visit the cousins and to take John home by the steamer from Leith to Aberdeen. He found his son much changed; a settled gravity subdued the wonted frolicsome spirit; he no longer filled the house with shouting. His sisters could not at first accustom themselves to this sedateness, but his interest in all their higher pursuits was greater than ever, and his brotherly tenderness and helpfulness reconciled them to his entreaties that they should busy themselves most with the life to come. It is difficult to discover how far he influenced them. Christina and Marion were clever girls, and they were at that stage of feminine development which sets high store on intellectual success. His prestige must have suffered from the undistinguished sessions in Edin-

burgh, but both loved him, and record that he was the kindest of brothers.

He was more successful with his brother James, a boy about fourteen years old, unusually handsome, with dark and dreamy eyes, and features moulded like a Greek's—so much, at least, we may judge from a portrait painted a few years later by Spanish Phillip. James consented to be taught and stimulated, and the earnest missionary brother read the Bible with him morning and evening, and rejoiced to find response in his sensitive heart.

But even already the tempest within was wearing itself out. It had done its perfect work, and that was to lead after many years to larger, truer views of the purposes of God. Already it had called him, with no uncertain sound, to stand aside from every folly which can betray the soul to the destroyer, and he tells us—

They had not the slightest attraction for me. I was not happy; I was not wise; but I did not go astray after vanities. I grew up in the atmosphere of purity, which was a rich compensation for all the thorny theology which my morbid subjectiveness and my Calvinistic discipline had imported into it. All my spiritual troubles were, as I afterwards found, only a process of fermentation, out of which the clear and mellow wine was to be worked. With all its sorrows, a youth spent in Calvinistic seriousness is in every way preferable to one spent in frivolity.

When he returned to Aberdeen he found Aunt Manie away, gone to see her relatives in Hamilton. He undertook to send her a chronicle of home news, which she cherished proudly as an archive. This letter illustrates his tendency to subjectiveness. He begins, with a brave effort at self-suppression, to tell her the family doings. These included a visit to a menagerie of wild beasts, to which Mr Blackie had taken his children, poor Marion being left at home to expiate some girlish prank. The account of this visit comes early in the record, and then, alas! for Aunt Manie thirsty for homelier gossip, these wild beasts suggest a lengthy homily, divided into four parts, upon the advantages to be derived from the study of zoology. Two closely written pages, out of the three which form the letter, are filled with weighty observations on this subject, and the honour of the thing had to compensate for their dulness.

When the holidays were over he enrolled himself as a regular student of theology at the University of Aberdeen, as there he could take his full course and remain an inmate of his father's house.

The two professors who chiefly influenced his studies were Dr William Laurence Brown, Principal of the University and occupant of the Divin-

ity Chair at Marischal College, and Dr Duncan Mearns, Professor of Divinity at King's College.

Both of these men were strong Moderates, hostile to the growing Evangelicalism which possessed a number of the younger students, and of which Thomas Chalmers was a powerful exponent. With this Evangelicalism John Blackie scarcely came into contact. His father's friends were Moderates, as were all the professors of note in the University. The only Evangelical preacher who visited the house was a man of small attainments and of sleepy manners, held of little account by Mr Blackie, and not likely to attract his son. Such of his fellow-students as were fervent against Moderatism, carried their arguments about with them more like weapons of offence than prevailing influences, and were seldom intellectually impressive. All that was sober, judicious, scholarly, dignified, was on the side of Moderatism; the Evangelicals were indiscreet, undisciplined, hot-headed, and it was not yet surmised that because they were hot-hearted too, it would be given to them to rouse the sluggish Church of Scotland from torpor to life.

But from these very Moderates John Blackie received enduring lessons, and he records them with full gratitude.

Principal Brown, whose twofold function it was

to inculcate Divinity and to improve the Latinity of his class, succeeded at all events in the latter half of his undertaking. Influenced by Holland, where he had held the post of Professor at Utrecht, he was perhaps the most accomplished Latinist in Aberdeen, where scholarship ranked high. It was as easy for him to think and speak in Latin as in English. It is true that in neither language did his thoughts display much depth, for he was more concerned with the phrasing than with the sentiment; but the ease with which he criticised the essays and discourses of the students in flowing Latin, stimulated them to follow his example, and by constant reading and composing to enlarge and practise their vocabulary. To John Blackie particularly the Professor's powers acted as a useful spur, and he determined to follow every method suggested till he should secure a like facility. Once more the house in Marischal Street began to echo to his voice. High-sounding quotations from Cicero, transposed and paraphrased, bore witness to his diligence, and orations in imitation of his favourite author were delivered in the retirement of his room, against a bedpost grovelling in sedition or a wardrobe which revelled in impious luxury and crime. He recognised at once the importance of a method

which Dr Brown had imported from learned Holland, and he soon acquired enough of fluency to enable him to risk a critical adventure, which won for him not only the Professor's applause, but a somewhat notable position amongst Latinists at the University.

Every student had to prepare and deliver a theological discourse in Latin, and this had to be prepared without assistance. Before his public criticism of each discourse, Dr Brown was in the habit of asking the members of his class to offer such critical remarks as occurred to them. Unbroken silence had always followed this challenge, and it had become a mere formality. But one memorable day young Blackie rose in answer to its delivery, and began to criticise the foregoing discourse in English. The Professor brought his fist down with emphasis on the desk: "*At hoc non fas est, domine; quæ Latine scripta ea et Latine judicanda sunt.*" The student expected this, and turned deftly into some well-worded sentences, no doubt in sounding Ciceronian triplets. The Professor was delighted, and John Blackie's position as a Latinist was made. But he was not contented with this success, and continued to think, speak, and compose in Latin until it presented no further difficulty. That this is the right method of acquiring every

language, whether living or dead, was borne in upon him from the precept and example of Principal Brown, and it has still to be recorded how steadily he maintained its importance throughout his life.

But the Divinity Professor rendered him further service. His course of lectures was on the body of Patristic lore, and embraced a review of heathenism and its teaching, between which and that of the Fathers a sharp line of demarcation was drawn to define the contrast. Perhaps the subject lent itself to the oratorical displays in which Dr Brown delighted, and swelling words veiled inadequate thought. One of his students has given it on record that in four years of lectures he never once heard the name of Jesus Christ; but then he was an Evangelical, and clearly expected too much. John Blackie was eager to learn, and so he learned enough, no doubt, to set him reading and thinking for himself.

He attended the Divinity lectures in King's College by Dr Duncan Mearns, as well as those by the Principal, and this course was weightier both in matter and manner than the other. Dr Mearns was a man of great ability and of extensive reading. He was thoroughly versed in his subject, and was besides capable of treating

it with entire conscientiousness. But his severe and pompous manner, the distance which he maintained between his dignified self and the raw youth whom he loftily instructed, made kindly discipleship impossible, and when young Blackie from time to time ventured to ask for further light, he was publicly and ruthlessly snubbed. Dr Mearns was a leader in the Moderate party, and as such he descended into the arena of controversy, and published an invective against Evangelicalism as represented by Thomas Chalmers. It pleased his party mightily. Even John Blackie approved of its arguments, for in those days the new interpretation seemed to vulgarise salvation, which the respectable felt to be their monopoly. Respectability lay heavy as lead upon the Church of Scotland, and pedantry was piled upon respectability. And yet it was from a Moderate that John Blackie got his best and most lasting lesson.

He was still occupied with his religious life, although its mental fermentation had subsided to a somewhat dull and moody self-absorption. Still he sought help from this and that writer's interpretation of the Gospel, and laying hands upon a ponderous tome, Boston's 'Body of Divinity,' he proposed to himself to solve the question with the help of the famous divine of Ettrick. One of his



father's friends was Dr Patrick Forbes, minister of the parish of Old Machar, and Professor of Humanity and Chemistry at King's College. Moderate although he was, a certain warmth and impulsiveness characterised him, altogether foreign to his pompous fellows. It was a pleasant walk to his manse, and John went now and again to see him, and to convey some message from Mr Blackie. One day he found him in his study, Horace on one hand, the Hebrew Scriptures on the other, seated at a high desk, the walls round him lined with huge quartos and folios bound in vellum,—works classical, scientific, horticultural, and polemical. John had come on an errand of his own, to ask the Doctor about his course of theological reading, and particularly to discover his opinion of Boston's 'Body of Divinity.' His outspoken adviser made short work of Boston :—

What have you to do with books of divinity by Boston or any other? Are you a Christian? What should a Christian read before his Bible? Do you know Greek? Whence should a student of theology fetch his divinity in preference to the Greek Testament?

The word was opportune and final. The scales fell from John Blackie's eyes.

There was [he says] both sense and gospel here. I immediately flung aside my 'Body of Divinity,' and forthwith got my Greek Testament interleaved, and commenced

a course of Scripture study without the slightest reference to the Westminster Confession or any other systematised essay of Christian doctrine.

He was now face to face with divine teaching, which guides each mind by different processes to realise the same great truths, and from that day the well-thumbed Testament lay ready to hand in his coat-pocket.

Take your knowledge of the case from the evidence of the original witnesses, from them directly and from them only in the first place; you will then be in a condition to profit by the observations and opinions of other men, which, without such a previous course of independent training, could only confound and cripple you. This was what my Gamaliel taught me.

To Dr Forbes he owed many pregnant lessons, and towards him his attitude was always docile. A friendship sprang up between him and the sons of Old Machar manse, and this gave him frequent opportunities of seeking and receiving the fresh, suggestive, imperious dicta which the Doctor, half genially, half defiantly, hurled at him about every topic of the day. The Professor's chemical researches had given him more than ordinary insight into the working of the divine energy, and he taught his young friend to recognise it in every process by which the world is maintained and renewed. "Wherever life is," said the

Doctor, "God is." The sentence solved much for his disciple. It illuminated a whole horizon dense with cloud, a curtain which had seemed to him providentially disposed, and to be accepted with dumb endurance. And now he found that without an effort on his part the cloud was dissolved and gone—that God was its interpreter, no grim deity who loved to limit and perplex His creatures, but the omnipresent Wisdom. It was a release from bondage to freedom. In middle life he wrote—

This absolute and only possible truth I found afterwards in Plato, but it did not appear to me a whit more evident, touched by the imaginative genius of the great Greek idealist, than when it came forth in full panoply from the hard head of the Aberdeen Doctor. Resting upon this postulate, I have since then always looked on Materialism and Atheism as two forms of speculative nonsense, and a firm faith in God was made clear to me as the one keystone which makes thought coherent and the world intelligible.

Many years passed before he realised his full debt to Dr Forbes. He was still under the impression that a learned Moderate might give him a lift on a question of speculation, but he would have scorned to seek his advice on a question of inward and personal religion. It took a long time to teach him that the impulses which develop our spiritual life are as surely correlated

as the physical force which is heat, or light, or motion, as conditions decide its form.

Always teachable, although always eclectic, he found here and there the lessons which he needed, gathering them out of the open hand of Providence. Thus Dr Forsyth, the minister of Belhelvie, taught him to use his eyes. He was another of Mr Blackie's friends who took an interest in John, and he helped him insensibly out of the preoccupations which at this time gave a touch of moodiness to his manner. Dr Forsyth was a student of nature like Dr Forbes, physics and botany occupied his leisure, and the young science of geology claimed his walks about the district, hammer in hand. The flora of Belhelvie hedgerows and fields, the material of Belhelvie dykes—with such homely plants and stones he made his walks a page in God's great Missal, and taught the young friend, who sometimes shared them, to decipher for himself the characters which conveyed His Wisdom, inscribed in stern relief, or wreathed with delicate beauty.

## CHAPTER III.

## STUDENT LIFE IN GÖTTINGEN.

1829.

THE aggressive element in John Blackie's character was suspended for a time; its energy was concentrated on himself, and although we hear of no peevishness at home, and of no petulant refusal to comply with his father's wishes, everything tends to prove that he was at that stage in growth when the inward life absorbs all vigour from the outer life, feeding upon the very strength which it afterwards learns to direct. Between the two lives there was at present no healthy interchange. He brooded in silence over his perplexities, considering them as all-important; the interests of others seemed trifling, and the seeming sympathy which made his boyhood so attractive was in abeyance. What gleams of light in-

formed his mind had not yet attained to instruct his heart, and although he was never harsh nor deliberately unsympathetic, he was no longer his father's eager companion, the centre and sunshine of the home. Much was conceded to him as student and future divine, but his moody habits excited occasional reproof and considerable anxiety.

He tells us, with tender penitence for these remote delinquencies, how unsociable he was, how unwillingly he went with his father to fish the Don or Deveron, how he hung back sullenly, singing dully to himself and buried in endless cogitations, how in a room full of friends he sat wrapped up in his own thoughts, humming a tune in most ill-mannered fashion, despising the kindly family life, which seemed to minister nothing to his inward needs.

His course at Aberdeen University was at an end, but he hesitated to take the further steps which should lead to his ordination. His mind had worked itself into a great confusion. With an impulse towards liberty, its fetters clanked at every struggle. He no longer knew how much he believed of the stern doctrines which oppressed him. He was as religious as ever, and practised his devotions night and morning with a melancholy fervour; they had become a kind of fetish whereby he clung to the hope of salvation. But

his mind was working on a plane which his devotions had ceased to affect, and he was conscious of the discrepancy. Of unflinching honesty, he recoiled from teaching others doctrines of which his mind had not a full assurance, whose once absolute outlines had grown nebulous.

The father was keenly alive to his son's perplexity, though not admitted to his confidence. His hanging back from the steps which would commit him finally to the Church told something of the inward conflict. He was still too young for the ministry, or at all events he was not gifted with the necessary assurance which is ordinarily the privilege of youth. Mr Blackie called at the manse of Old Machar, and talked the matter over with Dr Forbes. "Send him to Germany," said the practical Doctor; "his jacket wants widening."

His own sons were going to Göttingen, and the two fathers discussed the *pros* and *cons* of the plan to such issue that Mr Blackie decided to send John along with them. When he was told of this decision, much of the depression which had settled upon him lifted and rolled away. Indeed it was greatly due to the want of stimulating variety in his circumstances, and the unexpected prospect of a new world of men and minds to compete with came like a wind from an un-

known shore laden with promise. He felt as if at last he were about to step into life, to use his own limbs, to see with his own eyes, to hear with his own ears. He had exhausted Aberdeen, and his mind drooped for drought; but the little cloud was in the sky, and already he raised expectant needs and hopes to absorb the coming showers. The natural play of his feelings returned, and before he left Aberdeen he was frolicsome, wilful, and happy, as his home had known him of old. He felt deeply grateful to the watchful kindness of his father, which had recognised the emergency and was so ready to provide for it.

Some trembling feminine voices were raised against the undertaking. "Was not Germany," said Aunt Manie, "the home of rationalism, and might not the sound Calvinism with which he had been inoculated suffer some dire change which might lead him dear knows where?" Black thoughts filled her mind, not to be allayed by any laughter—perhaps only paraphrases of her womanly wish to keep John at home and see to his shirts and stockings and occasional ailments.

He left home about the middle of April 1829, John and Francis Forbes going with him. They stayed ten days in Edinburgh, delayed by violent east winds, which prevented the sailing of the packet from Leith to Hamburg, in which their



berths were taken. The sight of these berths provoked much dismay, and they spent a day in futile searching for a larger vessel. The leisure in Edinburgh was put to use in collecting letters of introduction from every available source. Mr Henry Glassford Bell, then the editor of the 'Edinburgh Literary Journal,' and acquainted with Mr Blackie, proved very helpful in this quest, and took John to call on many noteworthy citizens of Edinburgh, amongst others on his old Professor, Christopher North, whom they surprised in *déshabille* at his writing-table, stimulating the muse with snuff, which lay spread out on the table ready for use. A sheaf of useful documents represented the harvest of these busy days, and amongst them were two letters for Rome, which indicates that already the father's plans included Italy in the tour.

At length, on April 23, the packet sailed, but the east wind was still too violent to admit of its passage down the Firth, and it sought shelter at Burntisland amongst a little fleet of wind-bound vessels. The delay gave occasion for an excursion and some merrymaking amongst the party of five passengers who occupied the dismal cabin. One of the two strangers proved to be a Hamburg merchant, and John struck up an acquaintance with him at once, and began to

practise upon him the few phrases of German which formed his small capital in that language. The good merchant humoured him, enlightened all three on some of the non-academic duties and endurances of student life, and gave them a letter of introduction to friends in Dresden.

On the 24th the wind slackened, and the packet ventured on its voyage, but hardly had they cleared St Abb's Head when a heavy gale swept down on them, and did not improve their opinion of the accommodation which the little packet supplied to its unhappy passengers. But the storm was weathered, although it kept them out at sea a couple of days beyond their time, as the captain would not venture on the perilous navigation at the mouth of the Elbe while the landmarks were obscured by tossing waves, and there was risk of their being driven on some shoal. Heligoland was passed at last, a pilot shipped, and they sailed up the Elbe at full speed, both wind and tide in their favour. It was a rough outset, and they were glad to step ashore at Hamburg.

Here John wrote a detailed account of all the incidents of the voyage to his father, who had impressed upon him the importance to the home circle of frequent letters, filled, not with lucubrations, but with mere objective descriptions

of places, people, and experiences encountered. This injunction, piously obeyed, enables us to follow the young Aberdonian abroad with satisfactory accuracy, although his minute record must be condensed with some regard to the proportion which these vivid years bear to the rest of his life. Their very vividness, however, attests their powerful influence on the man whom —along with his heredity, patriotism, and faith in God — they emphatically compacted. The John Stuart Blackie whom we know would not have existed without them, and they are the key to much in his character and opinions which we should otherwise find inscrutable.

After spending a week in Hamburg the three companions began their journey to Göttingen on Wednesday, May 6, about three o'clock in the afternoon. The only conveyance was the mail-coach, and the roads between Hamburg and Lüneburg, a distance of thirty miles, were miserable. When the wheels of the lumbering waggon were not sunk in sand they were plunged in water —a succession of sandy wastes, interrupted by pools of water, representing alike scenery and highway. They were shaken and jolted and crowded for these thirty miles; but after Lüneburg the roads proved better, and they could begin to enjoy the novel circumstances. The

distance of a hundred miles between Hamburg and Hanover was covered by ten o'clock on Thursday night, and they were glad to make a stage on soil which in a sense was native ground, the capital of his Britannic Majesty's Hanoverian kingdom.

But the journey had introduced them to a party of Göttingen students, who like themselves were making their way to the University. These were delightful fellows, overflowing with good-humour and *camaraderie*. They spoke no English, it is true, and the Scotchmen came quickly to the end of their courtesies in German; but a medium of intercourse was found in Latin, which John Blackie had made so far his own, and which the rational pronunciation in use at the Scottish Universities enabled him to wield intelligibly to his new acquaintances, whom he found nearly as fluent as himself in the language. Where Latin failed them, French filled the gap, and he was glad to hear their German songs and witticisms, and get used to the rollicking gutturals. Their company made the long journey endurable, and a prompt acquaintance was established with the band, to be renewed at Göttingen when they met a few days later.

The three Aberdonians stayed two nights at Hanover, but found it lacking both in beauty

and interest. They continued the long journey to Göttingen on Saturday morning, arriving that night. They went to an inn for a few days, spending the following Monday and Tuesday in a search for lodgings. There was some difficulty in securing a set of rooms suitable for a party of three. The whole of Göttingen laid itself out to house students, but singly, or at most in pairs, so that they were not installed till Tuesday evening in a suite of rooms, which comprised two bedrooms and a large sitting-room. The scale of their expenses is a thing of the past, even in Göttingen. Breakfast, dinner, supper, beer, tobacco, and lodgings cost them about twelve shillings a-week each. Their dinner came from a purveyor to the students, and arrived at mid-day in hot dishes—soup, two kinds of meat, vegetables, sweets, and cheese, for something under sixpence a-head. A pleasant German damsel waited on them, and helped them to pick up the language of everyday life; and they found amongst the minor conveniences of their housekeeping the rare luxury of a pair of sugar-tongs, which gave them an air of princely distinction when their fellow-students came to drink coffee.

Letters from Aberdeen soon reached John Blackie, and brought discomfiture with them.

His father, over anxious for his progress, demanded that he should on no account take up house with his friends, as it would stand in the way of his rapid acquirement of German. Here they were, housed and happy, and the fiat came upon them like a thunderbolt. So John sat down to convince his father that they gained rather than lost by sharing each other's initial difficulties. They studied with a competent master from six to eight hours daily; they spoke German to each other, imposing a fine of two *Pfennige* for every relapse into English; they read only German newspapers, and they conversed for hours over their beer and tobacco with students of some years' standing, who could enlighten them upon all their privileges—and all this at the end of one week's residence in Göttingen. The same letter describes their combats with such bold Teutons as ventured to overcharge them. Like worthy Aberdonians, they quickly learned to express a resolute suspicion of every price imposed, and to find out the minimum cost of every necessary article. The letter ends with a pæan in praise of beer and tobacco. Its plea obtained, and they were left in peace.

As soon as he could manage a fair mouthful of German, John matriculated as a student in the philosophical faculty, and without an hour's

delay began to attend lectures. The course to which he devoted himself especially was Professor Heeren's "Political System of Europe," but by the rule of "hospitising" practised in the University, he found himself free to visit the classes under Hausmann, Blumenbach, Ottfried Müller, and Mitscherlich. By diligent use of the Professor's 'Handbook,' by regular attendance, and by unremitting study, he soon began to follow with ease, and to receive with astonishment, and with some indignation, the impressions which the ample culture of a German University was likely to make on the hungry mind of a Scottish student tantalised with the meagre diet at Marischal College. Professor Heeren's lectures covered the whole area of European history from the time of the Reformation to the end of the eighteenth century, and were not only grounded on his immense knowledge of the subject, but revealed a method of treatment which was entirely new to the Aberdonians. His class was credited with having outgrown crass ignorance, with knowing already the histories with which he dealt, and therefore with being in need of no hammering at a sequence of facts—a part of their instruction which belonged to the school, and not to the university. He grouped their knowledge, interpreted its connecting influences,

displayed the relations of one State to another, the living unity which interpenetrated the whole system, the inevitable development which the three centuries had witnessed,—suggesting and combining in the masterly manner which Continental historians had acclimatised long before it was adopted in England.

Heeren himself was a pleasant, genial man, advanced in years, but energetic and hospitable, who received his students on Sundays, and made the Scotchmen welcome with the rest. He conversed with them in English, which he spoke fluently. His well-stocked library, his simple home-life, his immense learning, his industry, his devotion to the work allotted to him, made a profound impression on John Blackie. Here is a man, he realised, who lectures not once or twice, but five times a-week; who lectures not for five but for ten months every year; who studies and restudies every part of his subject, not contented with the vast learning which he has already accumulated; and who, conversant with every new aspect of his work, handles the whole with such ease and strength as to rouse the minds of his students to the liveliest interest and exertions.

Acquaintance with other Professors, to whom he had brought letters of introduction, revealed



a similar industry, accuracy, and learning, a like simplicity of life, and in the case of several a European fame. Such were the naturalist Blumenbach, the philologist Ottfried Müller, and the historian Saalfeld. The first received the young Scotchmen kindly, made them welcome to come to him when they cared to do so, and astonished them by his copious knowledge of English. He was eighty years old at this time, but lectured on the different departments of Natural History to large classes. His library included books in every European language, and they discovered that the most recent English treatises on science were not only there, but were already well conned, while his own treatises entitled him to be considered the first authority in Europe upon his subject.

We have the following portrait of Ottfried Müller in Professor Blackie's "Notes":—

I recollect calling upon him and finding him in his study, in the midst of quartos and folios in all languages. He was a tall, blond, blue-eyed, open, cheerful, intelligent, fine-looking fellow, and moved about with the litheness of a young tiger; but the elasticity of his bodily motions was in nowise connected with any mere skirmishing quality of mind. In mental calibre he was as massive as he was limber; he could drag after him a whole train of heavy artillery with no more labour than it costs a common man to move his finger. This was my first impression, and ac-

quaintance with his work—of which I had no knowledge at that time—has made the original impression stronger. I do not know that any of the great German philologists had a more rich, graceful, and various sweep of living erudition. He wanted only a longer life to have contested with Wolf and Boeckh the highest honours of scholarship in the most scholarly country of Europe in the nineteenth century.

Professor Saalfeld, too, received them kindly, and poured out such a torrent of English that the Scotchmen were bewildered. It was his manner in every language which he spoke, and they found his German overpowering. The weather at this time was bad. "Göttingen weather," said the Professor,—“eight months of winter and four of no summer. We are having our no summer now—a most excellent thing for a University; the worse weather, the more study. Keep house, and study, study.” And indeed it has been hinted by Universities less renowned, that Göttingen owes its learning to its weather.

Two months of such experiences taught John Blackie what learning really was, and gave him once for all a right conception of the professorial office, its duties, devotion, and dignity.

With reference to our Scottish system of education, the scales fell from my eyes. I perceived that at Marischal College they had degraded the University pretty much into a school; that they drilled boys when they ought to have

been stimulating young men ; that our academical system was prominently puerile, and our standard of attainment lamentably low. I burned with indignation when I thought of these things, and from that moment became a University reformer.

Prompt to let those know his mind who needed it, he set down his indignation on a sheet of foolscap, and posted it to an Edinburgh editor. This was Mr Henry Glassford Bell, who published the letter in a summer number of the 'Edinburgh Literary Journal.' It was the first sound of the trumpet blown just as he ended his twentieth year. Throughout his life its blasts were reiterated wherever there were men to listen.

While he was roused to deep admiration of the teaching system and massive learning of the German University, the fervour which kept him true to his devotions was wounded by its indifference to religion. His companions and he went regularly to church, and were astonished to find that some fifty persons formed the ordinary congregation, that few of them were students, and that the sight of a Professor in one of the pews was still rarer than the sight of a student. Something like one-twelfth of the number of students went occasionally to church. For the rest, and for these ordinarily, Sunday was a day of pleasure or of study. Amongst those who habitually

avoided church, free-thinking was prevalent, and it gave him keen pain to discover that some of his most admired Professors were outspoken rationalists. The Botany class went for its excursions on Sundays, led by the Professor, whose work was so interesting that but for this consideration he would have enrolled himself upon the list. In Göttingen itself the pulpit utterances were meagre, but he found that by making a Saturday afternoon excursion to a neighbouring town he could stay all night and hear a spirited discourse by an earnest preacher next day, walking back to Göttingen that evening.

He relates a few experiences at the convivial meetings of the Burschen Clubs, but neither he nor his companions seem to have frequented them. They visited the Professors who invited them, exchanged tea and coffee drinkings with congenial fellow-students, took long walks on Saturdays when the weather permitted, and on other evenings after their day's study made the round of the town ramparts for rest and fresh air.

The rain, which persisted throughout these summer months, increased a tendency to cold in the head, to which John Blackie in his youth was somewhat prone, and details of which Aunt Manie extracted from him in postscripts to his

letters home. His own buoyancy and eager enjoyment of work would have led him to ignore such paltry matters as the little ailments which dog our youth, but Aunt Manie attacked the subject categorically, and insisted upon a precise report. So we learn that he was far from well at times, but that he did the best that a poor male could do, separated from his own experienced womankind, to keep dry and to eat wholesome food.

His letters are full of pleasant humour, and bear witness to his affection for the home circle, and to a great deal of longing to know fully and particularly what things affected its every member down to Baby Gregory, whose pet name was "the Pope." He wrote bright notes to each of the children, taking trouble to print them for those who could not read writing, and going into every detail of their interests, encouraging his sisters in their venture into Latin and their study of history, and poking fun at James, whose mistakes in French were a family topic.

Mr Blackie was exacting about the length and punctuality of his letters, and John submits to him a humorous plea for consideration should these be delayed a day or two beyond the appointed fortnight, and deprecates the gathering cloud of "black thoughts," to which each mem-

ber of the family was sure to contribute some imaginary disaster, as—

That I have studied myself to skin and bone over old musty German books; that I have drowned myself in the bathing-place here; that I have fallen over some steep precipice, or lost myself in some forest in the neighbourhood; that I have become disorderly, and, having made riots in the street, have been thrown into prison or expelled the University; that I have offended some of the students, and, as a punishment therefor, have got my nose or my cheek cut off in a duel; or, finally, that some inundation of the Leine has hurried me down extra-post to the mouth of the Elbe. I humbly petition that these and all such Black Thoughts may not be admitted till, at least, four weeks have elapsed between my letters.

The “two female pillars,” as he calls them, were concerned about his social appearances, and desired that he should become acquainted with the wives and daughters of these o’er-learned Professors, that his manners might benefit as well as his mind from his visits to their homes. To relieve their anxiety he gives in a letter written on August 22 an account of an evening spent at Professor Blumenbach’s, when the old naturalist was holding a formal reception, and when he, John Blackie, was introduced to a very charming young lady, with whom he held converse in the German tongue for an hour and a half, but upon what subjects he roguishly declines to state.

But, he assures them, the circumstance was not without a fine effect upon his bearing and appearance.

The lack of robust health alarmed his father, who began to plan for his transference to the south of France, in the hope that a better climate might help him to throw off the persistent cold in the head, which acted as a drag on his advance. But John implored him not to exile him yet from Germany: he was willing to go to any other German University for the winter session, for, he admitted, the climate of Göttingen was clearly hurtful to his health, but he could not bear to forego his contact with the treasures of learning, which he had only just begun to appreciate. Several letters were exchanged on the point, and it was left in abeyance subject to his consulting the best doctor in Göttingen, and to the effects of a walking tour which he proposed to make in the Harz district. Dr Conradi supplied pills in large quantities and approved of the Harzreise; so about the middle of September, when the summer term had ended, the three friends set out on foot to undertake the first part of the expedition together. John, who had an extended tour in view, sent a box on to Leipsic, and, knapsack on back, started for the beautiful Hanoverian Switzerland. By this time he closely resembled the German

student whom he so much admired ; his classic features, long brown hair, and slight energetic frame, the learned gravity of his face in repose, its mobility when excited, the unshackled movements of his arms and hands, with which he talked as vigorously as with his tongue, and his garb, more convenient than fashionable, all bore already the impress of his contact with Göttingen life. The costume of the three travellers included, besides the knapsack, a waggoner's smock, which was worn over the ordinary clothes to protect them from dust, and which, being washable, was a very useful garment. A flask for brandy was worn on a strap slung round the neck, and for all articles else, except the spare shirt and tooth-brush which the knapsack held, they trusted to such towns as lay in their route.

They left Göttingen on the morning of Friday, September 18, and walked as far as Osterode, a town lying immediately under the western ridges of the Harz, and twenty-five miles from their starting-point. Here they spent the night, and climbed up to Clausthal on Saturday morning. They inspected the mines there, John conversing freely with the miners, and eliciting facts of some interest about their busy, contented life—amongst others, that one of their number was chosen chaplain, and that every morning before they descended



to their work he read prayers and a sermon. They returned to Osterode for Saturday night, and on the following morning the little party was divided, the two brothers making straight for the Brocken, and intending to pass without further delay through the district, while John Blackie had made up his mind to take it more in detail, and to visit particularly every one of its celebrated mines.

The introduction to geology which he had received from Dr Forsyth had been confirmed by some open lectures given by the Mineralogical Professor at Göttingen. Already he had collected a little store of specimens, despatched a fortnight before to furnish the "Museum" in Marischal Street, and now he pursued the subject with all the interest which actual observation lent to it. He went to Goslar and inspected the Rammelsberg mines there, then spent a day or two in the beautiful Okerthal, from which he engaged a guide to the Brocken. This excursion yielded something of an adventure, for after walking through the Ilsenthal the guide struck, and left him to climb the Brocken alone. He was tired and solitary, meeting only two persons who were descending, and whose information as to the intricate path, with all its bifurcations, was accompanied by a warning that if he took the wrong

turning he would certainly be lost. Worn out with the five-and-twenty miles which he had tramped since morning, confused about the path, the afternoon fading into evening, he was about to give up in despair, when a smart pedestrian overtook him and piloted him safely to the Brockenhaus, where supper and a bed on the floor—for every room was full—restored his courage, but did not compensate for the mist, which hid the landscape, and which next morning made the rising sun a mere conjecture. He rested well, and started about one o'clock next day for Elbing-erode, where he spent the night.

But we cannot follow him by every road and rest of his pilgrimage. He turned eastward by Blankenburg to Mannsfeld and Eisleben, satisfied his strong sentiment for Luther by this visit to his birthplace, then trudged along the straight and dusty roads to Halle, relieving his weary feet by an occasional lift in the diligence. He spent two days at Halle, and then took the stage-coach to Leipsic, which he reached on the 2d of October. Much visiting of mines had been accomplished in the interval. He had met an inspector of mines on his way, and with him had effected some most interesting excursions, which repaid him both for the failure on the Brocken and for some disappointment with the

much -vaunted scenery of the Harz, which is fuller of surprise and beauty to a dweller on the North German plain than it is to a Scotchman used to loftier peaks and more impetuous torrents.

He reached Leipsic at the time of its great autumnal book-fair, and having an introduction to Messrs Barth & Co., effected there a commission with which his old teacher, Mr Peter Merson, had intrusted him. This was to purchase a number of Latin works, whose profundity made them scarce in the book-markets at home, and whose titles alone are enough to scare a modern student. The visit gave him an opportunity of seeing the motley gathering at the fair, and of staring for the first time at Greeks and Armenians, as well as at Jews from every corner of Europe. From Leipsic he went to Dresden, where he got his first glimpse of a great picture-gallery, and which he quitted for a tramp through Saxon Switzerland, avoiding Bohemia, and turning by Freiberg, Chemnitz, and Jena to the Thuringian Forest, which he traversed on his way to Eisenach. He spent a night in Weimar; but although he had caught the contagion of enthusiasm for Goethe which then fevered young Germany, he held back with natural Scottish modesty from intruding upon the "old man eloquent," contenting himself with

gazing on the house in which he lived. Perhaps the fever was not at its height, for although the three friends studied German classics for hours daily, they had begun with Schiller, and his works had absorbed a considerable portion of the four months' session. But he knew enough of Goethe to feel his strong Hellenic nature and to yield himself to its influence, one of the factors in that converging force which moulded the future Professor out of the fervid Scottish student. It was not till later that he made an exhaustive study of Goethe's poetry and philosophy, although already the spell was upon him which led to that undertaking.

Thuringia yielded both mines for his instruction and memories of Luther for his inspiration. Luther sat higher in his heart than Goethe, and the Wartburg, where the one hero vanquished the devil, was a more sacred fane than Weimar, where the other received ovations from the world.

From Eisenach he journeyed straight to Göttingen, and rejoined his friends in their pleasant quarters. He was refreshed in mind and recruited in body, and the "stuffed head" had yielded to constant fresh air and walking, so that he looked forward to a winter of vigorous grappling with the different subjects at which

he proposed to work. All difficulties with the language were over, and he was now in case to storm the citadel of German erudition.

But, alas! much consultation had been in progress at home, where anxious imaginations, engaged on the state of his health and the Göttingen weather, had exaggerated both to their utmost, and on the day of his return came the domestic ultimatum, which required immediate packing up and transference to Berlin. This was a blow, as John had meditated much upon his winter's work, and had dreamt of distinction in spite of every difficulty. But there was no alternative; and so, after many farewells and much natural regret, he started in the mail-coach which left Göttingen on the 30th of October, four days after his return from Saxony.

## CHAPTER IV.

## STUDENT LIFE IN BERLIN.

1829-1830.

PROFESSOR SAALFELD gave him a letter of introduction to Professor Raumer at Berlin, and he carried with him other introductions both to Professors and to residents in the capital. His journey was uneventful. The coach passed along the southern side of the Harz during the night, so that he caught not so much as a glimpse of the Brocken, and an excellent *Schnapps* at Nordhausen formed the sole record of this midnight return to the scene of his recent adventures. But Eisleben and Mittenberg, as he passed through them, provoked glowing apostrophes to "undaunted Martin Luther," although it was eight o'clock on Monday evening when they stopped to change horses and to sup at the latter town. The

wide plain which stretches towards Berlin was veiled by night, and he was glad when, at six o'clock on Tuesday morning, the coach passed through Potsdam, and an hour and a half later drove along the Leipziger Strasse and landed him in Berlin.

Two hundred miles were covered in the thirty-six hours. He stayed three days at an inn, spending most of the time in a hunt for lodgings. His father wished him to live if possible in the house of one of the Professors, and so to obtain all the advantages of intercourse with an educated German family; but Professor Raumer, whom he consulted on the subject, assured him that such a practice was unknown amongst the Professors. The intention had to be abandoned, and a search for rooms to be substituted.

It was not till Friday, November 4, that the search was successful; but by the evening of that day he found himself installed in most comfortable rooms in a house in the Luisen Strasse, for which he paid no more than thirty shillings a-month. During intervals snatched from house-hunting, he had managed to matriculate at the University and to take tickets for four courses of lectures. These were chosen partly for the sake of his prospective profession and partly in furtherance of his own inclinations.

His knowledge of German was now sufficient

to leave him unhindered in his choice of subjects. That great service, amongst others, Göttingen and his pedestrian tour had done for him, aided by his own ardour. He was quick to make acquaintances, and so preserved his fluency, and he was prepared by severe study to raise the standard of his knowledge to that of the most learned and classical authorities.

At first he felt exiled in Berlin, away from his companions and plunged amongst strangers, in a larger city, where the University was only one of many interests, not the sole concern of every individual as it was in Göttingen. The students in Berlin were scattered, and were not bound together by the ties of common circumstances and mutual dependence as in the smaller city, where they were a compact body animated by one spirit. His share in this looser organisation gave him a sense of loneliness, which one circumstance and another served to dispel, until he rejoiced in the greater variety of interests and in the less trammelled freedom of his own activity. The kindness of his landlord was one of the first reconciling influences. This gentleman had been an officer in the army, and he now employed the leisure of his retirement in elaborating various military inventions. He and his wife were interested in their lodger, and showed him many friendly attentions beyond his stipu-



lated requirements. When his books were unpacked and the business of the session was begun, he pulled himself together with that wholesome attention to what was presently in hand which characterised him, and useless regrets expired at the contact with new and vivid experiences.

The lectures which he attended were those of Professors Schleiermacher and Neander for Divinity and Church History, those of Professor Boeckh for Philology, and those of Professor Raumer for History.

Schleiermacher impressed him greatly, and he attended his sermons in the Trinity Church, as well as his academic lectures. He did not attain to personal acquaintance with him, but enjoyed his lectures on the Epistles to the Corinthians, and described their tendency in a letter home as orthodox doctrinally, and as quiet and winning in style. In the pulpit Schleiermacher was an effective preacher, and did much to awaken the religious sense amongst the educated classes. His finely cut features, his grace of delivery, and his clear, emphatic pronunciation, neutralised the effect of his deformity. In a discourse on "Great Men," with which John Blackie favoured his aunt, he pleaded for her tolerant and unprejudiced estimate of the famous German divine.

He is anything but a sceptic, deist, or neologian. I have no doubt his orthodoxy might even go so far as not to offend the old wives in the Glasgow churches.

Aunt Manie had been agitated by certain blasts of the Calvinistic trumpet against German rationalism, and had conjured her nephew by the names of Andrew Thompson and "Dissenter Rose" to turn a deaf ear to Schleiermacher and Neander. To which he very pertinently replied :—

As to what Andrew Thompson and "Dissenter Rose" may say, I do beseech you mind not a word of it till you have learned from a trustworthy source that these gentlemen are thoroughly acquainted with the German language, and have patiently and attentively studied the works of the German divines.

Neander's lectures were concerned that session with the Papacy in medieval times, and he unravelled its complications with unsparing hand. But he lectured besides on the Gospel of St John, and for the first time John Blackie heard that Gospel expounded, not merely as a supplementary Life of our Lord, but as a deeply spiritual expression of His mission and message. He was much attracted and impressed, and sought Neander's acquaintance. A certain tender ardour in the matter and manner of his discourses suggested the apostle and evangelist himself. But

his bodily presence was feeble, and he fluttered from his house to the University like a "pithless straw"; yet no man was more venerated by the students. He received the members of his class on Saturday and Sunday evenings, and John Blackie went amongst the rest. At one of these meetings Neander came up to him, and asked him many questions about Scottish theology. He broached the subject of Sabbatarianism. "You have some Jewish notions in Scotland with regard to the observance of the Lord's Day." The remark staggered the young Scotchman, and he muttered some helpless reply. He tells us—

I was startled to be told for the first time that one of the most significant observances of Scottish religiousness was not Christian but Jewish. At that time, to my mind, Scottish theology and Christianity were convertible terms, and the severe notions of my countrymen forbidding not only work but also amusement on the Sunday, a point in which they go beyond both the letter and the spirit of the original command, were so rooted in my mind that I could on no account go to the theatre or the opera on a Sunday. But I never had any cause to regret my conscientiousness. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Nevertheless, Neander's question led to a long train of serious meditation, and in after-years to a deliberate study of the whole subject of Sabbatarianism, which resulted in a perfectly clear

appreciation of the value and consecration of the day of rest.

For the present, while intellectually unsettled on this and other doctrinal questions,—and it was well, for so he attained larger and truer views of religion,—his heart and practice were evangelical. He never failed to go to church on Sunday, abstained on that day from all forms of work and amusement, except a walk for the sake of his health or a sober visit to Professor Neander, studied his Bible and particularly his Greek Testament, and attended the communion of the Lord's Supper in a Lutheran church behind the University.

He was so far interested in Professor Raumer's lectures as to give a sketch of them in a letter home. They treated of English history, and particularly of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Two years earlier Mr Henry Glassford Bell had published his masterly defence of Queen Mary Stuart, and John Blackie regrets that it was not known in Germany, where Schiller had given vogue to the theory of Mary's guilt, and where historians like Raumer based their acquaintance with Scottish history on the writings of Hume, Robertson, and Buchanan.

Ottfried Müller had given him an introduction to Professor Boeckh, which was entirely success-

ful. The great philologist, whose reputation as the collector of ancient Greek inscriptions was at that time at its height, proved a most kindly and entertaining host, flinging aside the learning, which he wore so lightly, on the occasions when he received his students, and keeping them in continual merriment with humorous stories and passages from Sterne or Smollett, which he read aloud with much spirit. His academic lectures were on Tacitus, but he went into every particular with such erudite minuteness that during the whole session the class accomplished only one book of the history. This was a little disappointing, as John Blackie had only a single session to spend at Berlin, but in later years he appreciated the lesson in close and effective study.

These classes at the Friedrich Wilhelm University by no means exhausted the studies undertaken for this winter. He made the acquaintance of a young theologian, a proficient in Greek, whom he engaged to read Homer with him four times a-week. They translated into German, so that from their work he reaped a double benefit. He soon made friends amongst the students, and with one of them he concluded terms of mutual edification. He undertook to teach his friend English in return for five hours' weekly help with the German classics. The contract repaid

both, and on John's side led to a careful study of Goethe's 'Faust,' while we find him brushing up his own language for the benefit of his friend. To make his lessons better, he studied the pronunciation of English as given in Walker's Dictionary, and so began a habit which outlasted this necessity. Throughout life he took pains with his pronunciation, and while never forfeiting the unadorned simplicity of Scottish intonation, he accepted the best authority as his guide in accent and quantity about all words apt to ring uncertain changes on Scottish lips. He writes home describing the new aspect of his own language as a subject for such study, and it is evident that by this time German had become the easier form of expression.

In view of his travels in Italy, he had thoughts of adding to this well-filled time-table two hours weekly at Italian, and he did add lessons in fencing, although they were rather for the sake of his health than for further accomplishment.

His health continued to show the benefit of his autumn tour. Only the cold in his head returned with the winter's work. His anxious father insisted on his consulting a doctor, and he tells his experience with merry relish and constant assertion of his own wellbeing. A friend recommended Dr Behrens, who lived in the Dorothea Strasse.

That's most capital, and just behind the University. I can manage the business in five minutes' time, and then in the evening, when I write my letter, I shall have something to say of the doctor and his prescriptions. But it most unluckily happens that there is a classical book-shop there, where Greek, Latin, and German books can be procured at a moderate price. Into this shop I went, and found several books for which I had been looking weeks before. Now there happened to be only a single louis in my pocket. This I had destined for the physician, at least part of it. Here therefore was an auction in my head, the books and the physician bidding for the louis. The claims of the one were in my estimation much greater than those of the other: the consequence was, the doctor lost his prey.

Finally the visit was effected, and Dr Behrens and his lively patient were mutually diverted. He did his father's bidding, but assured the doctor that he was quite well. The cold in his head was, however, sufficiently in evidence to require a prescription, and Dr Behrens ordered a vapour bath and daily exercise. As his lodgings were a mile away from the University, he found it difficult to wedge in a farther walk, so he compromised the matter by taking fencing lessons twice a-week, as already stated, and these calling for considerable muscular play, dislodged the enemy for a time.

His letters intimate that a change, of which he was quite conscious, was coming over his

views of secular life. This was the very change desired by Mr Blackie, who had seen his son gradually forfeiting certain powers of mind and temper by brooding and self-concentration. His horizon was contracted, not because he selected the most important in preference to the subordinate interests of life, but because he selected the former at the expense of the latter, and failed to see that all the energies with which we are endowed are good, and that our study must be how best to use all, not to employ some and disuse the rest. Mr Blackie and Dr Forbes believed that, thrown upon his own resources, his mind would regain its equilibrium, and that healthy enjoyment would take the place of which a moping self-sufficiency had deprived it. Perhaps, too, the wise father saw that something of this moping self-sufficiency was due to the unremitting vigilance of a too anxious family circle. All young natures shrink into themselves and become partially paralysed under the discipline of domestic nagging, and there is no doubt that the very pride and affection of which he was the centre at home took too constantly this form. He alludes to it playfully in one of his letters, and bids the "female pillars" take note that he is now a travelled fellow who knows the world and will wear his



knowledge with some dignity when he returns, with mind and manners polished beyond their ken.

In one respect his practice indicated this change. He began to frequent the excellent Berlin theatre, scrupulously avoiding the Sunday performances, but attending on those week-days when the play was either Goethe's, Schiller's, or Kotzebue's, the last dramatist being then counted of classical rank. He found himself in this way agreeably introduced to some of the masterpieces of German literature, and profited too by the pronunciation, which was most carefully studied by good German actors. It was easy to read at home the plays with whose action he was thus made acquainted.

His father, much astonished to hear that he had broken the serious resolves which barred the theatre as a snare of the devil, wrote to ask him what "new light" guided his doings. His answer treats rather of the complete change in his standpoint than of the particular instance; but as the expression of a most important mental transition, part of this letter deserves quotation :—

Powers for whose exercise there is no necessity cannot be developed. If we suppose that a person is naturally of a weak, pliant, and irresolute disposition, timid and retir-

ing, and averse to the noise and bustle of busy life ; if, added to all this, he be much given to study, the consequence will be that, though he grow in years, he will not grow in manly decision of character, but will labour under a weakness of active power very ill calculated for enabling him to perform a critical part in the world. In my opinion this was my case. My being sent abroad made me sensible of my awkwardness in active life. At first I could not stand at all on my feet ; afterwards I was only able to stagger along, swaying from side to side like a drunken man, very often striking my head against the corners of the streets, and even now, though I at times imagine I can march with the firmness of a soldier who has got out of the awkward squad, yet at other times I am not quite sure whether my head or my feet are uppermost. To a want of firmness when committed to my own charge, I added a profound ignorance of the world into which I was sent. What your repeated advice could not convince me of at home, a little experience abroad has taught me practically. You often told me it was ridiculous for a person to lock himself up in his study and never see mankind. But of all human souls mine was the worst formed to follow such an advice. Abstracted through a course of years from taking interest in the affairs that went on around, accustomed to a sort of internal meditation or rather dreaming, I felt no interest in the subjects with which it was most natural I should have been acquainted. Beyond the page of Cicero and the Greek New Testament I had very little knowledge. I always found it an endeavour to mingle in the passing interests, political, literary, or religious, of the day. But as soon as I came to the Continent and had intercourse with men, was obliged to speak with them as a man if I would not be neglected and overlooked in society, then I felt the nothingness and emptiness of my mind. But

thanks to heaven, who gave a good spice of the Blackie ambition into my constitution, I was not long before I observed my nothingness in comparison with my fellow-travellers. My pride was nettled. For what purpose did the blessed God of heaven give me eyes and ears and hands? Was it only to see old books bound in vellum, to hear theological lectures, and turn over folio sheets of dull pedantry? Or are there perhaps other objects in the world about which it was intended man should occupy his senses? Is it not a most ridiculous thing that a young fellow should have read Cicero's Orations, but not know even the name of one of Pitt's best speeches; that the *Bucolics* of Virgil should be familiar to a Scotchman who did not know how corn grew in his own country; that I should be able to give an account of Cæsar's victories, but hardly know more of Buonaparte than his name? Such thoughts have often crossed me: I therefore read modern history, picked up information at all hands, stirred up my stagnant soul to take an interest in what was going on around me, by which means I was enabled to keep my head above water.

This letter, which is dated January 18, 1830, concludes with a still graver passage, in which the recoil of his mind from the Presbyterian ministry shows itself very plainly, although it is evident that his desire to please so indulgent a father prevents him from directly intimating his wish to give up the profession. He speaks of his delight in languages both ancient and modern, of his resolve to acquire French and Italian as thoroughly as he has acquired German, and hints at his admiration of the professorial

chair. It is evident that he now wished to be set free from the pledges which bound him to take orders, and that he felt the difficulty of subscribing the Westminster Confession of Faith, now that his mind had widened under the influence of German theology. To become a minister of the Church of Scotland he would need to subscribe certain dogmatic articles, for which he found no warrant in his Testament—Calvinism, Anglicanism, and Romanism being all in the same boat as far as the imposition of an empirical creed is concerned. He felt the impossibility of this, and so began in a manner to negotiate with his father for a change of profession.

But deeply as he was concerned with a transition of such importance, he no longer brooded over his own phases without reference to other people, and this very letter shows how much he desired to know his father's mind upon all the topics of which it treats. An introduction to a worthy Berlin merchant gave him the opportunity for some social intercourse, independently of the grave University circle, and he writes gaily to his aunt of the hours which he spent with various pleasing young *Fräulein* who frequented Mrs Doering's *salon*. In these descriptions he bubbles over with freakish mirth, evidently

wishing to pique curiosity at home; but the passages in which he confesses himself bewildered amongst so many beauties exaggerate something his own audacity, because, as a matter of fact, he had still much shyness to overcome in the presence of ladies.

But he was doing his best to find the tact and polish which Mrs Blackie insisted could only be acquired from feminine society; and as the Doerings made him welcome to visit them when he had leisure to do so, it is wonderful how often the busy student contrived to call on the fair Miss Minna, craftily undertaking to assist her in her English studies. To fit himself better for social success, he began to take lessons from a musical friend whom he had picked up during the Harzreise, and whose knowledge of band-music had led the King of Prussia to make him Inspector of Military Bands. The amount of musical attainment in which these lessons resulted was not great, and helped him only to pick out with great difficulty the notes of a melody or choral; but he discovered that he had inherited some measure of his father's voice, and we find him writing home for "The Battle of the Nile," and other songs in Mr Blackie's repertory. This is the first intimation which we have of his accomplishment of pleasant, dramatic singing, one

of the many social gifts which made him afterwards the life of every festive gathering. No doubt the "Battle of the Nile" was much favoured by the Berlin students, burning with hot indignation at the recent memory of Napoleon's savage invasion, which had clouded the life of their patriot-queen, had reduced large tracts of Germany to sterility, and was the scattering of that baleful seed whose produce rose in ranks of armed men at Gravelotte and Sedan.

In furtherance of this social training, his father proposed that he should be presented to the King, which roused a burst of protest on John's part, reminding us of his agonised refusal to go to school in new clothes. He represented the solemnity as hedged about with difficulty, which indeed it was, as costing great sums for ceremonial garments, and as so overwhelming that he, a mere modest Aberdonian, would inevitably complicate his homage with some disastrous clumsiness, and so confound the name of Blackie for ever; and after a short correspondence on the matter it was allowed to drop. Mr Blackie was under the impression that the King of Prussia, like his Majesty of England, held general levees, at which any gentleman properly authenticated might make his bow, and he knew nothing of the triple tier of etiquette which fenced the

Prussian Court from all but titled persons and those whom the King desired to honour.

A pleasant young Irishman, Mr Jackson, came late in January to study in Berlin, and was particularly commended to John Blackie's companionship. He was full of vivacity, and having, as he said, "no tendency so strong as that of cutting throats," he meant to go into the army. Together they spent their short intervals of leisure, and Mr Jackson introduced his friend to an old Scottish lady who had lived thirty years in Berlin, and at whose house he met other compatriots.

Altogether, his residence in Berlin was a bright, profitable, untroubled time, his health nowise injured by the three months of keen frost which characterised that winter, and which, coming after a heavy fall of snow, made the ways impassable for wheeled vehicles, so that sledges filled the streets.

In a letter written early in February, he describes an interesting conversation which he had enjoyed with Neander. Its subject was Dr Paulus of Heidelberg, and his interpretation of the Gospel story according to the "new light" of rationalism, which took all possible liberties with the text in order to rob it of its spiritual significance. Neander described to him how Paulus

treated the "one thing needful" alluded to by our Lord in His gentle admonition to Martha. "Dear Martha," he interpreted, "you have indeed shown a laudable diligence in preparing a meal for me. I take it very kind, but you have neglected one dish, which is better than all the rest; this you must also make ready." And Neander added: "What this dish was, Paulus, who is fond of good eating, knows best himself."

He gives an account of the church attendance in Berlin, which compared favourably with what he had observed in Göttingen; but this was not surprising, for in Berlin the pulpits were filled by men of learning and persuasive power, like Schleiermacher and Strauss, who preached in churches crowded to the door.

In February he began to take lessons in Italian, giving himself six weeks to attain as much knowledge of that language as would suffice for travelling needs. His plan was to wait in Berlin till John and Francis Forbes joined him, and after a few days spent in showing them the sights of the Prussian capital, to start together on a roundabout route for Italy, intending to reach Rome early in May, and there to spend three months, coming north to Switzerland and France for the autumn, and then returning to Berlin. The plan was partially carried out, as we shall



see, but Rome proved too mighty a study and too potent a magnet to release him quite so soon.

Early in March he wrote to Mrs Blackie a letter full of gratitude for some words of loving commendation which she had sent him, and which had greatly cheered him. His enjoyment of the advantages which Mr Blackie's generosity provided for him made him very sensible of that generosity, and his desire to profit by them in all ways which were sure to please his father is evident in every letter. That his studiousness, earnestness, and intellectual advance had given pleasure at home this letter testifies, and it must have compensated for many an anxious moment.

In the same letter occurs an amusing passage about women. Perhaps the fair Minna had proved ungracious in a recent interview, for he declares in a burst of petulance that "girls are no better than painted dolls," and then proceeds to elaborate that portrait of his "ideal woman" which haunts the brain of young enthusiasts, with whom, if the marvel existed, they deem themselves quite fitted to mate. He adds the saving clause, however, that if he ever found her, it is a hundred to one against the chance that she would look on him with favour.

His stay in Berlin was wearing to a close. It had been of great service to him. When summing

up the results of his student life in Göttingen and Berlin many years afterwards, he wrote—

At the conclusion of the winter session in Berlin I found myself perfectly master of the German language, thoughtfully read in some of the best German classics, and learning to speculate slowly and thoughtfully under some of the best German influences. But there was a want of speciality about me. I was neither a theologian nor a philosopher, a philologist nor a poet—just a young man on his travels learning to live and to feel and to think, with theological tendencies and a possible theological destiny. I left Germany with a warm side towards the German people, which I have retained through life. Their simplicity, truthfulness, and unaffected naturalness; their thoughtfulness, honesty of research, accuracy of learning, and breadth of generalisation; their kindness, frankness, and true-heartedness were just the sort of virtues that had a peculiar attraction for me. I was glad to learn from them. For many years I went about in the world oppressed with nothing so much as a feeling of my own ignorance and stupidity. This feeling made me constantly open and eager to learn; and this eagerness to learn led by slow degrees to the attainment of a certain amount of wisdom.

## CHAPTER V.

ROME.

1830-1831.

JOHN BLACKIE was hurried away from Berlin by his impetuous friends, John and Francis Forbes, who arrived on the scene earlier than they were expected, and stayed a much shorter time than was quite convenient. Excellent fellows as they were, their patriotism was of that type which scorns to be greatly interested in foreign sights, and it disposed them to make short work of a tour imposed upon them by the paternal wisdom, but offering no particular attractions to sound Calvinists and practical Aberdonians. Francis scouted as ridiculous John Blackie's assertion that he could stop a week at every place they passed, and being a masterful spirit, he swept the little party forward. Now and then young

Blackie rebelled, and insisted on a longer stay where his interest was specially awakened. Their first halt was at Dresden, from which place he wrote to his father. This letter describes the hurry imposed on his final arrangements and leave-takings at Berlin, but speaks with sincere regard of his comrades. He managed to take impressive farewells not only of Miss Minna Doering, but also of other gracious *Fräulein*, who deigned to accept the little volumes of English poetry which he offered as parting tokens, not without a tear or two on either side—those facile Teutonic tears that come for little, and go as they come.

The farewell visits to the Professors were of sterner stuff, and less evanescent in their results. For Neander gave him a most valuable introduction to Mr Bunsen, Prussian Ambassador at the Papal Court; and Boeckh provided him with a letter to Professor E. Gerhard, an archæologist at Rome of European fame. Another friend opened the doors of the kindly confraternity of painters by making him known to two chiefs of the order.

He packed up all his German books, along with a number of engravings collected for his father, and despatched them in two heavy boxes to Aberdeen. A third box went to Mr Peter

Merson at Elgin, full of the rarer works which that gentleman had desired, and which Leipsic and Berlin had proved competent to furnish; and so, having got rid of these weightier matters, he equipped himself for further travel, and started for Dresden on March 25.

The trio stayed some days there for the sake of the picture-galleries, and then proceeded by Prague to Vienna, which they reached in time for the Easter ceremonies, and where they found so much to interest them that they remained twelve days. Mr and Mrs Jackson were at the inn where they put up, and made pleasant return for John Blackie's kindness to their son in Berlin. But a misfortune overtook him here which abated his satisfaction with the tribute of praise now and again granted by the home authorities to his thrift and financial management. He had gone with his friends to a sumptuous Easter ceremonial in the Cathedral of St Stephen, his pocket-book, which contained a letter of credit for a considerable sum of money, being in the inner pocket of his coat. The crush was tremendous, and the young men had pushed their way through a mixed crowd to get good places. When these were secured, John clapped his hand to his pocket, to find it turned inside out, and, of course, empty. Of ready money there was not

more than fifty shillings lost ; but at first he was inconsolable, as the letter of credit was for a sum sufficient not only to carry him to Rome, but to pay his expenses there for two months at least. The sacristan and he searched the church in vain, the police were applied to without success ; but finally, on going to report his loss to the bank, he was comforted with the information that no one could make use of his letter of credit, as both the bank in question and all the other houses interested had his signature. He was half afraid, however, that his father might be sufficiently annoyed with his carelessness to recall him to Aberdeen, and he protested sportively that rather than that should happen he would enlist in the Italian army, or become a monk in a Roman monastery — two professions for which he felt himself to be eminently qualified.

The banker supplied him at once with money, so that, except for the temporary anxiety and for the shock to his self-esteem, which he so frankly admits, the incident proved harmless, and his father was too sensible a man to treat it otherwise than lightly.

From Vienna the little party travelled slowly through Styria and Carinthia to Trieste, at the rate of about fifty miles a-day, spending the nights at the ordinary stages. When they came

to Laybach they stayed two nights, so as to spend the intervening day in visiting the grotto of Adelsberg, with whose mighty halls and tunnels they were much impressed. Leaving Carniola, they took about three days to cover the road to Trieste. Here they rested a time, and then proceeded, always with the help of a *vetturino*, to Venice, where they made a week's halt. Francis Forbes distinguished himself as general manager and contractor, reducing extortionate *vetturini* to reason and paying them just one-half of what they demanded. From Venice they made their way by Ancona and Bologna to Rome without hindrance or mishap, heartily tired of the long jogging days, and as yet not at all enthusiastic about Italy and its sunny plains. Fatigue and hurry seem to have spoilt the last few days of travel, and John Blackie was heartily glad when they came to an end, and he was quietly housed in two comfortable rooms in the Via Due Macelli, close to the Piazza di Spagna. He was glad, too, to resume his own independence of action, for he had been constrained to adapt himself to the somewhat imperious direction of his companions during nearly two months, and as he was no longer either ignorant of his own will or incompetent to use it, the strain had required all his philosophy and that control of his temper which is always difficult to a young

and eager spirit conscious of varied needs and interests and curbed by circumstances. It marks the discipline to which he had already attained, that his complaint of these circumstances is always gentle, and even tempered by admiration. But the relief is evident in the bright letter in which he signals to his father his settlement as a free and independent lodger in the Via Due Macelli.

He dined every day at a *trattoria* in the Piazza di Spagna, at that time much frequented by artists, and took his afternoon cup of coffee in the well-known Caff e Greco. He delivered his letters of introduction to Severn and Gibson, and through them became admitted to a fellowship with the artists in Rome which was both socially delightful and roused in him the dormant faculty of seeing. He began almost at once to take lessons in drawing, and so equipped his vision for daily discoveries.

His letters from Rome begin at quite an early date to be illustrated by neat little pen-and-ink sketches of the columns and statues which he described, and although he did not pursue this accomplishment after leaving Italy, it is certain that from this time he began to look at the world of nature and that of art more fully instructed what to seek in either. It is notable that he was not at this time greatly impressed with the beauties of nature. He says himself that "his



delights were with the sons of men," that the veriest rag of humanity was more interesting to him than the finest landscape, and that he regarded the latter as but a fitting scene for the action of the former. Homer, Shakespeare, and Browning were of the same mind as to the relative importance of man and nature, but all three mighty poets knew nature well, and could in a brief flash of words illumine her features and her moods. John Blackie learned in later life to love her better, and, as we shall find, to seek the companionship of her mountains and moors, and to accept their message.

It is not wonderful that he should at once have begun to investigate the Roman Catholic religion as demonstrated in its acts of worship and ethical results in Rome. At first the piety of the Italian people attracted him—the little services reverentially offered at street corners and at humble shrines, the "Ave Maria" of the vesper hour, the tender devoutness of kneeling peasants in the open basilicas; and so much did this side of the worship appeal to him that for two whole days he was seriously disturbed by doubts whether, after all, the right form of Christian worship were not to be found in the Roman Church. It was natural that, diverted as he had been from Calvinistic theology, his open mind should be ready

to receive impressions from these incidents in the drama of the Church. Ever and again the faithful devotion of the poor, their eyes filled with wistful veneration of some vast mystery which it were sacrilege to probe, attracts sensitive hearts to their worship; but the mind taught to put aside a material pageantry, and to commune with the Divine, soon rejects the fleeting influence. John Blackie was not yet fully schooled, but he was honestly seeking "a religion to live by," and it was soon apparent to him that Roman Catholicism bore few of the desirable fruits of righteousness. That there were saints in that Church as well as in others he discovered, but they were so by special grace. The tyranny over heart and intellect, the low level of energy and aspiration to which the system condemned its subjects, the childish attitude encouraged by shows and superstitions, the canker of immorality in high places, the greed and luxury of clerical princes and prelates, revolted him, and as these things grew confirmed to his observation, he vented his indignation in a torrent of eloquence to his mother, who must have been reassured by the outburst as to any evil forebodings caused by his first sentimental interest in the Church. This letter contains scarcely a sentence of practical information. He

wrote it at a white heat of invective, and forgot to curb himself by the epistolary rules imposed upon him. It was, therefore, notwithstanding its staunch Protestantism, rather a failure in the home circle, anxious for descriptions and personal details, and he was reproved accordingly. He bore the discipline well, and admitted his failings as a correspondent with cheery humour.

He was acquiring Italian rapidly, his knowledge of Latin bridging the difficulties. He made few acquaintances amongst Italians, however, although their kindliness attracted him; but he was at this time so prepossessed with his debt to the German type of mind and character, that he was not yet capable of acknowledging their claims to sympathetic study. He commented on this afterwards:—

The Italians made decidedly no impression upon me, not because they had not much that was worthy of my love, but because my heart was already preoccupied by the Germans. The world with which I was specially occupied was the world of thoughts within my own soul, which I was anxious to humanise and to unify, and in this task I had to struggle into clearness by the help of the Bible and of the Germans. To any questions that I had to put, the Italian oracles were altogether dumb. I made no intimate acquaintance among that people. I was possessed by a feeling that a vast gulf divided them and me, which it was impossible to overbridge. The Germans had laid hold of me firmly in Göttingen and Berlin, and they kept that

hold in Rome. There was a great narrowness about this, no doubt, but young men are naturally narrow, especially those in whom the subjective element is preponderant.

But his visits to the great collections of Rome and to the ruins of its ancient glory inspired him with the desire to stay during the coming winter, and to devote himself to classical study in their neighbourhood. He wrote to his father requesting his permission to do this, and offering to give up Paris altogether, as of secondary importance to his aim. He described the openings which Rome offered for further study of Latin and Greek literature, for more intimate acquaintance with Grecian and Roman art, and for such a detailed study of Roman history as would fit him very thoroughly for the position to which he now aspired—that of Professor of Humanity in some Scottish University. He admitted that, although this favour might be granted him, his ability to profit by it might not equal his ambition, but he promised that his industry should at all events aim at the latter. He urged his father to send him a speedy answer, as his desire to remain had fevered him with anxiety, and he proposed to divert his thoughts by going to Naples in the interval which must elapse before the answer could reach Rome. It is interesting to find

this letter prefaced by some verses freely translated, or rather paraphrased, from Horace, his father's favourite poet; and although this was probably not the first instance of a tendency to weave his more urgent emotions into rhyme, which became a constant characteristic of his later life, it is the earliest example given in his correspondence. He pressed his suit in these verses, which contrast all other cities with Rome, and end—

“For though in Rome I should for ages pore,  
Not even then were all my studies o’er.”

He suggested, too, that should he never sit on the academic stool, at least he would be a most learned divine.

The wife and daughters of his acquaintance, the German pastor, were about to visit Naples, and he decided to share their carriage and have the pleasure of their company. But fate had prepared for him an absurd trick, which turned the journey into an adventure. A certain Captain Blacker had made himself obnoxious in the kingdom of Naples, and instructions lay at the consulates to prevent his crossing the frontier. John Blackie was summoned to the Farnesina, where resided the Neapolitan Consul, and he was there informed that his passport was not

satisfactory, as it certified only a "Monsieur Blackie," and gave no information with regard to his profession. He applied to Mr Bunsen, who guaranteed his innocence of the inconvenient behaviour of the objectionable captain, and the Consul was good enough to admit that he looked both young and harmless.

He started with the ladies about the end of June, passing through Papal territory until they reached Terracina, the frontier stage. Here they underwent the delay and vexatious inspection incident to those times, but his passport proved equal to the occasion. When they reached Mola di Gaeta, where they halted for the night, their passports were again delivered up to the authorities. At supper the travellers were disturbed by the arrival of the police. It was politely intimated to John Blackie that his name was suspicious, and that further inquiries must be made, pending which he was requested to consider himself detained. In vain he explained himself; the police inspector agreed that his appearance was not that of a *carbonaro* English captain, but with all courtesy maintained his position that black crosses marked the name of Blackie in their register. The ladies appealed to the obdurate official, and did their best to beguile him from his untoward sense

of duty, but in vain, and their cavalier, stamping up and down the room and exploding in mingled wrath and mirth, found himself a prisoner on parole. His passport was sent to Rome for identification, and three days passed before it was returned. The ladies stayed with him during the first day of his captivity, and the whole party wandered about Gaeta and through the grounds of Cicero's villa of Formiæ, where the great Orator of Rome collected his library of valuable manuscripts, where Clodius wreaked his miserable vengeance, and where, when it was rebuilt and readorned on his return from exile, Cicero sought refuge from the bravos of Antony, perishing at their hands in his feeble efforts to escape. This exploration was of great interest to the "prisoner of Gaeta," for Cicero was still his favourite author, and he could furnish his companions with all the details of that tragic day. But the ladies were not able to prolong their stay, and so mounted their *vettura*, and drove away on the second morning. He spent the two intervening days as best he could, and rejoiced greatly when the evening of the second brought not only his permit to proceed, but two gentlemen on their way to Naples whom, by good fortune, he had met in Rome, and who being Germans, and of friendly disposition, made

the closing hours of his captivity cheerful, and gave him a seat in their carriage to Naples next day.

These friends became his constant companions in Naples, and together they visited both the art collections of the city and the memorable districts in its neighbourhood. A few lines of his own contemporary description will best indicate the ground which he covered during a stay of five weeks. The wholesome enthusiasm of youth tends towards grandiloquence. He wrote on August 8:—

I have visited all the marvellous regions celebrated in the 6th book of Virgil and the 10th book of the 'Odyssey'; I have stood on the promontory of Cumæ, where the Trojan hero consulted the god of oracles through the medium of the Sibylla; I have seen the still and deep waters of the infernal Lake of Avernus; I have stood on the ruins of the magnificent palaces of the ancient masters of the world in Baiæ and Pozzuoli; I have traversed the silent streets of Pompeii, and with torch-light disturbed the subterranean stillness of Herculaneum; I have seen the barren streams of lava which mark the destructive course of Vesuvian fire, and I have heard the boiling of its caldron; I have visited Capri, wild and romantic abode of the most diabolic of all Roman emperors, Tiberius; I have seen the now uncovered ruins of his lofty palace, and I have trod on the mosaic staircase once trod by the tyrannic feet of this monster and his prætorian guard; I have visited the volcanic island of Ischia, which, though at present



not tormented by eruptions, is yet shaken to its centre by earthquakes: all this I have seen, and let me add besides,—the old temples of Pæstum, which, having withstood for ages the attacks of time, of Goths and Saracens, stand now fast and immovable in almost their ancient splendour, as if to mock the more splendid yet less solid edifices of the moderns.

Amongst his excursions from Naples must not be omitted a visit of some days to Sorrento, where the German ladies from whom he parted at Gaeta were staying, and it was in their agreeable company that he visited Capri and wandered on its heights.

He busied himself during the final week in collecting minerals, engravings, casts, and coins for his father and mother, and he alluded in his letters to the anxiety with which he looked forward to the news from home which would decide his fate for the winter.

He returned to Rome about the middle of August, to find a kindly letter from his father cordially granting his petition. It filled him with a grateful impulse to set about immediately the more intimate study of the classics which he proposed. Mr Bunsen introduced him to some of the Roman libraries, where he found old and rare editions of the Latin authors; but he was at first even more indebted to the hospitality of an English resident in Rome, Mr Finch, a friend of the

Prussian ambassador's and a man of unusual culture. This gentleman had collected a large and very valuable library, and as it contained every critical work in English, French, and German, as well as in Italian, and was, besides, well stored with classical books, John Blackie rejoiced to have the privilege of using its treasures. He borrowed at once both Horace and Virgil, and as Rome was deserted in the heat and stillness of summer, he went to Tivoli, and found in the Sibyl Inn both quarters and two German artists with whom he made terms of good-fellowship.

Here he began to read his Horace, with excursions to every spot in that region commemorated by the poet, while the artists shared his roving for their art's sake, and were not unwilling to listen to his readings and declamations. For the youth was as the child had been, and Horace was voiced to the Sabine winds. The excursions included, of course, Hadrian's Villa, which impressed him sufficiently to call forth a lengthy description. After a fortnight at Tivoli, he commenced a walking tour through the Sabine district, staying at Olevano and Subiaco, and making them points of departure for prolonged expeditions to the higher ridges of the Apennines. Horace and Virgil in his pocket, provisioned with a piece of bread and cheese, and picking up refreshing draughts of wine

at the *osterie* by the way, swinging a stout walking-stick for support and defence, he would start at sunrise and walk till sunset, resting during the hotter hours for dinner and siesta. In this way he thoroughly explored the country and identified every spot which his poets had commemorated. Sometimes he managed a walk of twenty-four miles in a day, and his excellent health bore witness to his wisdom.

He was delighted with Subiaco, where, as well as at Olevano, he found a bevy of busy artists, and where the hospitalities of the inn and their marvellous cheapness encouraged him not only to prolong his stay, but to return again and again as to a centre. In this fashion he made his way to many points of its radius, and amongst them to Alatri and the plains south of the Volscian mountains. It is worthy of note that he never alludes in his letters to the medieval associations of these places. Benedict and his brier-bush do not seem to have existed for him. His talk is all of Roman and Etruscan, of battles on the heated plains which gods and goddesses alighted to witness from an amphitheatre of peaks. The mighty myths of Virgil were written on all the land, and the pale palimpsest of medieval miracle availed nothing to expunge their sterner characters.

He made acquaintance with an English artist

at the inn, and they fell into the habit of taking these long walks together. One of their joint expeditions was to Fucino and its fragmentary lake, and they struck the ancient Via Valeria, which leaves the highroad between Subiaco and Tivoli, on their way. As John Blackie had no passport for this excursion into Neapolitan territory, the magistrates of Subiaco signed a paper declaring him to be a fit and proper traveller. But the police at Celano made much disturbance over the informal document, and he was again in danger of detention. As his object was to visit the antiquities without going farther, they were finally induced to overlook the irregularity, and he returned to Subiaco without scathe to his liberty.

He stayed as long as his funds would permit, for he travelled with little money about him ; but so trifling were his expenses—less than two shillings a-day—that it was October before he returned to Rome. Here sad news awaited him. His friend Mr Finch was dead, and a learned German acquaintance, who like himself was pursuing his classical studies in Rome, and whom an academical appointment awaited, had also succumbed to a sudden fever. For a time John Blackie fell into the utmost depression of spirits. He was no match for the grim warrior death, who,

not contented with the slain, leaves many sore stricken on the field of his victory. Doubts crowded on his mind, and he brooded himself into a melancholy.

Mr Roods, his artist friend, came to the rescue, and carried him off in the lovely autumn weather to the Volscian hills, where they visited Velletri, Cori, Norba, Ninfa, and Segni, always on foot, walking from twenty to twenty-five miles a-day, and resting at the white towns, which glitter like "grains of salt" amongst the sunny heights. Here, as Mr Roods sketched temples, convents, and *contadini*, John Blackie aspired to do likewise, and had what he called "a fit of the drawing madness." He got on fairly well, and his friend taught and encouraged him. From the hills they descended to the Pontine Marshes, and walked across to Civita Lavinia, Virgil in hand. Then the short walk to Nemi brought them to its mysterious lake, and skirting its shores, they made their way to Palazzuola, to the site of Alba Longa, and so round the Alban Lake to Marino, avoiding the main route through Albano. They returned to Rome by the end of the third week in October, with health, spirits, and energy completely restored.

He alluded to the "drawing madness" in a letter to his sister Christina, which indicates also

that he had given up his rooms in the Via Due Macelli, and had established himself in the Via di Ripetta. The huge folio sheet was mainly filled by a lengthy metrical effusion entitled "The Monk's Sermon and the Devil's Annotations," and announced to be a satire on Catholicism ; but it is to be feared that his verses were not so much appreciated at home as his narrations, and his sister expressed herself severely as to the undue preponderance of the former. But he apologised as follows :—

You see I am verse-mad. But you know I am subject to various kinds of madness, and of frequent recurrence. In Aberdeen I got religious-mad ; then I got Latin-mad ; now I am verse-mad and drawing-mad, and am getting fast antiquity-mad. Out of this never-ending fermentation may something good arise, that I may not be eternally driven about by every wind of doctrine. But, as it is, I have no more command over my whims and fancies than a henpecked husband has over his wife.

His study of the antiquities of Rome now began in good earnest, and included a thorough research into the literature of architecture. Mr Finch's death had closed all access to his valuable library, but the German artists, whose society he frequented, introduced him to their library, in which he found copious works on art, antiquities, and architecture. Professor Gerhard, to whom he was introduced by Boeckh's letter, received him

with great kindness, and on learning the bent of his studies, gave him much assistance by suggestions which regulated the order of his reading, as well as by books and papers on special archæological subjects.

His letters during November and December contain abstracts of these studies, and one of them gives an excellent account in brief of the Roman Forum, then known as the Campo Vaccino. They are illustrated by drawings of columns, capitals, and architraves, and must have satisfied the inquiring minds of the Blackie household better than the rhymes of former effusions. In a letter to Aunt Manie he thus describes his days in Rome:—

I rise about seven, and after reading a chapter of the Bible and composing a prayer out of it, I go and make my breakfast, which consists simply of a cup of coffee and bread. Till mid-day I read in the Minerva Library. Then I come home, and after lunching, study and draw. After drawing till about three o'clock in the afternoon, I go every second day to my drawing-master, with whom I remain an hour and a half, then stroll about till five, when I go to the *restaurateur* and meet my friends and dine. After dinner I either read at home or go to the German pastor's, where there is German society, and where we have rational discourse on all subjects, religious and worldly. These parties generally end with a chapter of the Bible and a prayer. On Sundays I go to the German church, take a walk, read Klopstock and the Bible,

and in the evening visit the Prussian Ambassador, who on these evenings has most beautiful sacred music. I have also a general invitation to his week-day evening parties, as well as to those given by the Duchess of Torlonia, where I see all the beauties of Rome, a sight worth all the musty antiquarian and Latin books that were ever written.

One of these letters hints at a possible book on Roman antiquities, to be published when he returned to Aberdeen; but as his knowledge increased, the vastness of the subject disheartened him.

His steady church-going and Bible-reading testify to the constant flame of devotional feeling in his nature, because at this time his mind was quite unsettled concerning doctrinal religion. He was shedding the hard husk of Calvinism, and was unwilling to accept the effusive self-exaltation of the early Evangelicals, being too young yet to be wisely tolerant and to see beyond the workers to the work. Their ignorance of the Holy Scriptures in any but the obvious sense, and their refusal to study them with any candid system of interpretation, — what he termed their “canting and ranting harangues,” distinguished too often by prejudice and not by wisdom, — estranged him from their party, although amongst them he acknowledged men of sincere personal religion, anxious only for the best interests of mankind. From



time to time, unable to feel himself at one with any professed religious party, he fell into fits of deep dejection. Visions of death, judgment, and eternal perdition filled and paralysed his mind. Mr Bunsen, a man whose diplomatic ability owed its exceptional influence to his rare and Christian character, came now and again to his rescue, and the German pastor availed him too in times of need. On one occasion Bunsen took him to his own study and questioned him about his religious convictions, urging him with such tender earnestness that John Blackie burst into tears. Another time, when in a scoffing strain he alluded to the doctrine of eternal damnation, Bunsen called him sharply to order, reminding him "that the duration of other men's damnation was no business of his, that he would find enough to do attending to his own personal religion, and that damnation of some kind or other was sure to follow on all unrepented sin." The older man, matured and ennobled by Christianity, was displeased to find this clever youth, in whom he took an interest, wasting his energy in "boggling among dark theological questions of no practical value."

It was during an access of depression that he visited one morning the Hanoverian Ambassador, Mr Kestner,—interesting to us as the son of Werther's Charlotte,—to whom he had been in-

troduced by Mr Bunsen. Mr Kestner amused his leisure by drawing portraits of his friends, and on this particular morning he was busy with a study of John Blackie's head. Watching his sitter, he divined his state, and questioned him with gentle persistence. John Blackie confessed his despair at his own protracted immaturity. "Believe me," said Kestner, "your slow growth predicts a rich ripening: the larger nature needs long development."

So wise a sympathy served to dispel the present cloud, and to ward off its approach at many an after-time.

His Christmas Eve was spent with the Bunsens, and he speaks of the kindness which they showed him on this occasion, Mrs Bunsen having provided a rare and beautiful engraving for his Christmas gift. He began the new year with a thorough investigation into his gains from that just completed, and this investigation seems to have made him realise more than ever his great indebtedness to his father, and the duty, growing ever plainer, of putting a period to that indebtedness by fitting himself as soon as possible for remunerative work. This meant more and more a professorial chair, and we find him redoubling his efforts to become qualified for so honourable a post.

His friend Professor Gerhard suggested that a minute study of some antique bas-relief or inscription, which had not yet been made the subject of an archæological paper, might not only concentrate his labours, but might give scope for an essay in Latin or Italian likely to promote his ends. The advice was good, and he changed the field of his researches from the Forum to the Vatican, whose marvellous collection gave him a larger choice. Here he made lists of likely subjects, drawing them up to the extent of his artistic attainments,—which had taught him the important lesson of overlooking no detail,—and studying them at home. Books in Latin, Greek, French, German, and Italian were needed for this work, and these he procured either from Professor Gerhard or by making copious extracts in the Minerva Library. When Mr Gerhard's books and manuscripts were too valuable to be lent, he had the privilege of frequenting his rooms and copying the informing passages at his very study-table. His gifts and assiduity pleased the Professor, whose own industry was immense, and who hoped to make a useful archæologist of his young friend.

The part which Greek necessarily took in such a quest awoke his dormant interest in that language, and that interest shortly resolved itself

into fuller study. He had made the acquaintance in Rome of a young Greek student, and at once engaged him to give him two lessons weekly in modern Greek. With quick observation he noted that the language of Homer had suffered but little change, and that while three thousand years have seen the rise of many a modern tongue, while Latin has given birth to a whole sisterhood of varying dialects, while tongues have lived and died or linger obscurely in the *patois* of insignificant valleys, Greek is still spoken in the streets of Athens and in the villages of the Peloponnesus changed in but few inflections from the language of Pericles and Agesilaus. From this time dates his enthusiasm for Greek. The rapidity with which he acquired its modern form astonished his teacher, with whom he always talked in Greek. Homer, Æschyles, and Sophocles became instinct with life, and were soon companions as constant as Virgil and Horace.

Busy as he was with increase of his store, he seems to have felt much timidity about his own power to make use of it. In a letter to his father dated January 20, 1831, he says :—

I have always been haunted with a want of confidence. I always fear that what I could say or write on a subject would not be worth the hearing or reading. But too much

of such a fear is childish, and I must pull up all my courage to shake it off.

In these lines we have evidence not only of healthy modesty, but of that sanity of practical judgment upon which all worthy living depends.

The death of the Pope and the accession of Gregory XVI. took place about this time, and he wrote with interest in the uprising of many nations against tyranny, and rejoiced that even in Italy, Bologna, Ancona, and Ravenna were giving the newly invested Pontiff and his College of Cardinals some flutter of uneasiness. Indeed, as the days passed, the news that a rebel army was on the march for Rome, and that the Pope had gone to Civita Castellana, where he was mustering the Papal forces, gave all foreign residents a hint to pack up and be ready to leave at a moment's notice; but Mr Bunsen advised John Blackie to stay quietly where he was until the situation at Rome took a definite form. He greatly preferred to stay, and, as events proved, the capital and its immediate States were not yet prepared to throw off the sacerdotal yoke, and the rising in the north was crushed.

John Blackie's lessons in modern Greek helped him to a view of the pronunciation and accentuation of the ancient language, which grew to a

conviction as he advanced in its lore. He says in a letter to his father dated January 28 :—

I have a project in my head to set on foot a controversy about the Greek pronunciation, as I think it quite plain that our professors are wrong in not adopting the pronunciation of modern Greek. This is not a dead but a living language.

Thus early did he form an opinion on this point, maintained throughout his public career, and advocated again and again both in newspaper controversy and in academic conclave. Sometimes the longing to extend his travels to Greece breaks out in these letters. His generous father met that longing with a cordial approval, and proposed that he should now leave Rome and spend the spring in making a tour on the mainland and amongst the islands of Greece. The prospect was most alluring ; but John Blackie had begun to see how good a thing it is that a man should stand on his own feet,—and every lesson attained in the conduct of life, once become an organic part of his ethical philosophy, grew living and urgent. He declined the offer with dutiful gratitude, on the ground that to go to Greece now would be to sacrifice the completion of his gain in Rome ; that, infinite as the pleasure of such a tour would be, it must necessarily be only pleasure ; and that to acquire independence on his return to Aberdeen,

it was best for him to remain at his post, studying with all the severity which his archæological undertaking had imposed upon him. The subject of that undertaking was now selected. It was a bas-relief representing a battle between the Romans and the Germans, and to be seen on a sarcophagus in the Vatican Museum.

It plunged him into the specific study of Greek and Roman armour. To this end he had to search through poets, historians, antiquaries, and lexicographers, had to note and compare the weapons represented on the statues, bas-reliefs, pictures, and Etruscan vases to which he had access, and finally to identify each with its description in prose or poetry. Professor Gerhard refused to accept any but the most thorough work, and his disciple rejoiced to be forced to model his powers on the learning and industry of the great German archæologist.

A French *savant* had already made this bas-relief the subject of an essay, but had proposed some theory of its *motif* untenable on full investigation. John Blackie set himself to controvert this writer, but the first draft of his argument was couched in Latin so gusty and highflown that Professor Gerhard declined it, and imposed upon him a quiet and fully detailed statement of his views in unvarnished Italian.

These labours occupied the spring. Early in May his father became anxious for his return. This roused him to a sense of how deeply his interest was now involved in archæological pursuits, and as Professor Gerhard proposed to take him for a few days' tour in Etruria, he determined to make an appeal for further leave of absence. He sought Bunsen's aid, and that gentleman wrote to Mr Blackie a letter which is worthy of quotation, not only for the estimate which it expresses of John Blackie, but for the very fact's sake that it is a letter by Chevalier Bunsen :—

ROME, *3d May* 1831.

SIR,—I hope you will not find it too great a liberty if I presume to address to you these few lines. Although unknown to you except by the favourable report of my excellent young friend, your son, I have in the first place to thank you for the very kind message you have sent me through him. I assure you that I shall have very great pleasure in coming to Scotland to make your personal acquaintance, and to tell you by word of mouth how glad I have been to have known your son at Rome, whose acquirements, whose pure zeal for the cultivation of his mind, and whose excellent qualities of heart have endeared him to me and my friends in Germany and at Rome to a very high degree.

It is in consequence of his request that I take the liberty of observing to you of what importance it will be to him to be able to finish a literary research he has begun at this place. He scarcely can work it anywhere else but here, on account of the monuments he must



observe and describe, and it would certainly be very much to be regretted if he was to give it up entirely, after having bestowed upon it many months of study and research. I feel assured that two months will be sufficient to terminate it; and as he is in the enjoyment of the best health, and always active and busy, I really believe you will for this delay not think him guilty of a breach of promise. He has always expressed to me the highest sense of his filial duties, and I am sure he would willingly sacrifice not only every wish, but every laudable scientific pursuit, to a paternal command. But as this positive command does not exist, I request you, sir, not to withhold from him your sanction of such a prolonged stay of two months, which I can give you the most positive assurance will be of most essential use and importance to him. The work which thus he will be able to finish on the spot will do him honour in the literary world of Scotland and of Germany. Forgive, sir, the liberty I am taking, and believe me to be your humble and obliged servant,

J. BUNSEN.

When this letter was despatched, John Blackie set out with Professor Gerhard to visit the Etruscan tombs in the neighbourhood of Corneto. Here they went carefully over the sepulchres of the ancient people of Tarquinii and Vulci, which the proprietors, Prince Lucien Buonaparte and two Italian princes, had swept clean of every movable. He wrote a learned and interesting letter on the subject, touching on the controversy, which at that time raged amongst antiquaries, as to the Greek origin of Etruscan or the

Etruscan origin of Greek ornament. This letter was published in the 'Edinburgh Literary Journal,' whose editorship had changed hands, the first editor, Mr Henry Glassford Bell, having resigned his charge. Mr Jonathan Bell was in Rome, to his old friend's great satisfaction. He recorded their frequent meetings, and as frequent theological frays, both following the perfervid in-born impulse to battle over doctrines.

During the summer months of June and July, John Blackie was still in Rome revising and correcting, and at length satisfactorily completing, his paper. It passed muster by the end of July, and on August 2 he went out to Frascati to stay with Chevalier and Madame Bunsen at their villa there. One incident of this visit was related in after-years by his host.

One morning when breakfast was on the table and his young guest missing, Mr Bunsen sought him far and near in the grounds of the villa. Guided by tones which rose and swelled and sank with stimulating emphasis, he made his way to a field where grew in serried ranks cabbages, pumpkins, and warlike *granturci*, and here, addressing the regiments of vegetables in sounding Greek and after the manner of Demosthenes, he found his friend. Perhaps the neighbourhood of Tusculum had filled him with emulation, for just

in this manner, we are told, did Cicero perfect his Greek. Though new to Bunsen, the trait was one with which we are already familiar.

About this time he announced his intention so to devote himself to Greek as to become qualified for the Chair of Greek in some University. In the letter which contains this expression of purpose he abjures all thought of the Presbyterian ministry. Mr Jonathan Bell had given it as his opinion that he was neither an archæologist nor a theologian, but emphatically a linguist, and he endorsed his friend's estimate, though he hinted roguishly that there might be the makings of a tragic dramatist amongst his volcanic powers, as there was a constant stream of versification from within overflowing his control. Indeed his letters were written half in rhyme, and roused wrath at home.

He described his visit to Bunsen as delightful. He stayed till the middle of August, and learned many things from his host, amongst others to listen as well as to talk, an exercise which he felt at first to be penitential. Mr Bunsen had conversations with him about personal religion, and told him that he had too readily accepted the conclusions of German scepticism, and that a thorough study of the human mind might bring home to him the shallowness of all

systems which excluded the spiritual and the supernatural. Such lessons were humbling, but he realised that from the lips and example of such a man as his host they were a powerful corrective of the crude mental audacity which these years of freedom had engendered.

He read his essay to Mr Bunsen, who agreed with Professor Gerhard that it was a learned, accurate, and finished production, expressed too in admirable Italian. It was given to the printers at once, and was included in the papers of the 'Annali dell' Instituto di Corrispondenza Archæologica per l'Anno 1831.' It won from all experts the utmost praise both for its learning and for its Italian.

This result being secured, he despatched a box of books, prints, coins, and minerals to Aberdeen, sent on his own luggage to Munich, and prepared to leave Rome on September 2. He did so with a heavy heart, regretting most of all to bid farewell to Mr Bunsen, but grieved also to part from many friends, who had made the Eternal City like a second home.

## CHAPTER VI.

END OF *WANDERJAHRE*.

1831-1832.

JOHN BLACKIE and a young German called Thilemas started on September 2, knapsacks on back, dressed in white Italian summer suits, which could be washed when occasion offered, and without a care in the world other than heavy hearts at leaving Rome. Some of this heaviness can be traced to a romantic sentiment which had grown upon our hero for a certain clever and amiable Clotilda, to whom he had given lessons in English during the spring and summer, and whom he celebrated in abounding verse as the pattern of female dignity and charm. He had presented his verses on the subject to his family, however, and not to the lady herself, so that but for the sorrow that he must leave his

gentle friend with little hope of seeing her again, he was free from fetters.

The two pedestrians made their way by Perugia and Chiusi to Florence, taking nine days to walk the two hundred and fifty miles, at the rate of from twenty-five to thirty miles a-day. They stopped at the wayside inns for food and rest, and made the towns their stages for the night. The peasants whom they met could not understand the portent of two persons who scoured the country on foot, and sometimes they were refused admittance on the ground that only brigands and escaped malefactors pursued such courses. But they had much enjoyment of the tramp, and turned aside to view the antiquities which bordered their route. On September 11 they reached Florence, and made a halt of ten days to visit its galleries and buildings. The Tuscan country pleased them much, and they picked up what information they could about its well-cultivated valleys.

John Blackie wrote to his father from Florence in a tone of the most pronounced Radicalism, handling both the land question and the Irish question with vigour. He described the condition of the peasant farmers of Tuscany, who, paying a rent of three pauls an acre, were stimulated to industry by the certainty of becoming

rich ; and he contrasted 'their advantages with the state of heavily rented farmers in Scotland, who have not merely to find the rent in the soil, but to do so in a climate so uncertain and often so destructive of their outlay.

From Florence they walked by Bologna to Venice, with which John Blackie renewed his acquaintance. Their whole march from Rome had not cost them more than two shillings a-day, which he records with some pride ; but in Venice they met a Bosnian in charge of a return coach to Munich, who, being willing to pocket some trifle by securing passengers for the journey, offered to take them the whole way, with bed and board at the stages, for twelve florins each. As the journey lasted six days, they gladly accepted his terms, and travelled through the Tyrol and by Innsprück to their destination in comfort.

The two friends parted company at Munich, as Mr Thilemas lived there ; but after a few days spent in visiting the pictures and antiquities, John Blackie made the acquaintance of a German student bound for the University of Bonn, and willing to make the way with him on foot through Augsburg, Wurtzburg, and Frankfort.

Mr Bunsen had advised him to remain the

coming winter at Bonn, if he could get permission from his father to study there, and had furnished him with an introduction to Professor Brandes. But on his arrival he found a letter from Mr Blackie sharply reprimanding him for his dilatory return, and desiring to know on what earliest possible day he would be in London. This letter acted as a reminder that his years of liberty were coming to a close, and that his father would have a right to expect from him a return of evident profit for all the outlay and indulgence which had made them possible. The thought dejected him greatly, and for a time he lost sight of all that he had gained, and dwelt somewhat hopelessly upon the fear that, in spite of every advantage, he had acquired nothing of practical value. This self-distrust makes itself evident in his reply to the letter. He promised to leave Bonn in ten days, explained that what he had lost in time he had gained in pocket by making his journeys on foot, relinquished all new demands on his father's indulgence, attempted to summarise his gains from the two years and a half of absence, but admitted that his very gains might have led him to conclusions which would not only frustrate his father's hopes for him, but would possibly paralyse his own power to deal in any practical way with the circumstances



which form the very conditions of independence. Answering a stern comment on his scepticism, he concluded:—

My scepticism is not final. I have cleared the ground, perhaps, from flowers as well as weeds; it is no matter,—the flowers will grow so much the better afterwards.

His stay at Bonn was thus restricted to a mere visit; but he had the advantage of making the acquaintance of Professor Brandes, an acquaintance which ripened in after-years to friendship.

Mr Blackie took what was then the long journey from Aberdeen to London to meet his son, who arrived in London about the beginning of November, still clad in his white summer clothes. To have him properly clad would be the excellent banker's first care, as it was essential to the due carrying out of the paternal purpose in London. Eager as he was to see his son once more, he would hardly have undertaken the troublesome journey merely to forestall their meeting by a week. He came to introduce him to such of the London notabilities as he knew, and to secure their interest in his further success. These included Joseph Hume; Lord Brougham, who was a cousin of Dr Forsyth, the minister of Belhelvie; John Gibson Lockhart, connected by marriage with the Blackie family; Willian Jerdan, a Kelso

man and lifelong friend of Mr Blackie's, and at this time editor of the 'Literary Gazette'; and last, but greatest, Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

With Lord Brougham they breakfasted, dined with Lockhart and Jerdan, and spent an hour with Coleridge. The great poet and thinker was then old and infirm, his body was bent and his face sad. He told the young enthusiast for German philosophy that he had thrown all such speculation overboard, and found perfect satisfaction for every inquiry in the first chapter of the Gospel of St John.

A week of metropolitan bustle was enough for Mr Blackie, and they turned their faces homeward at its end. It was a memorable homecoming after two years and a half of absence. Mrs Blackie, Aunt Manie, and his sisters were much excited. As the travellers drove up, Helen, twelve years old and timid, for whom the brother had grown to be of mythical proportions, hid herself behind the window-curtains. Even the stolid James was moved by expectancy. His welcome home was all that he could desire; his words and looks and gestures were devoured by admiring eyes; the long hair—badge of his Germanism—was noted without censure; and his bubbling effervescence of fun and laughter evoked happy smiles at the full fireside.

He stayed at home for six months, during which time his father and he had many conversations about his future. With the admirable good sense which distinguished him, Mr Blackie accepted without demur his son's attitude towards the Church, and magnanimity as well as good sense dictated his acceptance; for all the advantages at home and abroad which he had gladly afforded him from the first indication of his theological impulse, were intended to fit him for a distinguished career in the Scottish Church.

And now his son returned on his hands, endowed with new and varied acquirements, it is true, but also with new and varied aims, and the studies which he had pursued to deepen his theological insight and to strengthen his grasp of theological doctrine had only served to bewilder the one and to paralyse the other. The finer polish, too, which was meant to adorn the doctrine of Scottish Calvinism had diverted his unsettled mind into secular directions; and here was this youngster of twenty-two aspiring to lofty academical posts because he must needs be enamoured of the learned and industrious lives and influence of veteran Göttingen professors.

But Mr Blackie made a shrewd reckoning of his son's gains and gifts. True, he was a youngster, and what he had learned in Scotland he had

promptly unlearned in Germany: but here he was, as expert in the use of German and Italian as were the native scholars of either land; a fluent Latinist; a student of Greek, successful in the verbal understanding of the language, and eager for further mastery of its difficulties—with fresh theories, too, to propound upon its accentuation and vocalisation; an archæologist, or at least with the accredited makings of an archæologist about him; well read in the literature of the languages which he had acquired, and with his appreciation of German literature so roused by its masterpieces that one of his liveliest aims was to make them known in Scotland by translation and commentary. Perhaps an overdose of Germanism disturbed the equipoise of these attainments; but Mr Blackie, critical and exacting as he was, could not but admit that his son had made full and varied use of his opportunities, and that when, with maturing, his gifts became practicable, he might occupy for their exercise a larger sphere than the cramped confines of a Moderate pulpit. To find him, too, a pronounced Radical, as the term went in those days, eager for reform in Church and State, in School and University, panting to set all things to rights, from an accent in Greek to a point in the dire dogma of perdition, was as sunshine to the father, in whose

Liberal politics John had taken little or no interest before he went abroad. He had returned a politician, hot for reform bills and the emancipation of nations. That, too, was a gain. So was his industry, which never flagged. His honesty was bred in the bone, and akin to his father's.

But all these excellences would neither create nor empty a chair of Humanity or Greek because he had set his heart upon it. Years and his youth must pass before the Areopagus which presides over academical honours could regard him as chastened to the type which it admired, and it was impossible for him to stay at home and attend the "psychological moment." Some profession must be adopted which would keep a fine edge on his wits, would permit him to maintain and increase his acquirements, and would in time open the way to independence by its own merits, should the door of scholastic preferment remain barred. Mr Blackie considered the matter carefully, and ended by proposing to his son that for three years, dating from the spring of 1832, he should study law in Edinburgh with a view to the Scottish Bar, and should receive during that time an allowance of £100 a-year. As there were many children to be provided for, and as Mr Blackie's income lay within the limits of comfort

rather than of luxury, the arrangement was most generous, and John, though little inclined towards the law, was too grateful for his release from the Church to object to it. It was but reasonable that his father should solve a problem which he himself had darkened with a multitude of heterogeneous purposes.

So, this matter settled, he fell to serious study, not of Erskine and Bell, but of German and Greek. In the former he tackled Goethe's 'Faust,' in the latter he made himself conversant with the plays of Euripides. We know already that one of the purposes stimulated by his immersion in German influences was to make the German masterpieces better known in Scotland. At that time little influence had penetrated from the literary revival in Germany to either Edinburgh or Aberdeen. The former had its own nucleus of culture, our great romanticist Walter Scott at the core, and minds were vivid enough and amply furnished with exercise. The stir and movement at home neutralised the inrush from without, and the names of Goethe, Schiller, Fichte, and Lessing were little more than names to Scottish ears. Thomas Carlyle had begun to drive them home into the minds of his countrymen, but to John Stuart Blackie belongs some share of the credit which Carlyle

received in fee for putting into home circulation the coinage of that lettered dynasty of Germany. But while he stayed at home, this work was at its elementary stage.

His choice of Euripides for reading in Greek was founded on the simplicity and luminousness of that dramatist's style in comparison with that of his greater predecessor's, whom John Blackie preferred when he grew familiar with both. But at this time he liked to master the story as he read, without the incessant stumbling over obscure passages which wearies the attention, and so he climbed less painfully the ascent which led to further toil. This gradual method he advocated in after-life, both on the ground of personal experience, and because mature Grecians amongst the Germans lent their authority to its support. Many years later he wrote :—

In the learning of languages fluency ought to be acquired first, then accuracy; the whole must be comprehended and felt with a living power before the details are minutely criticised. We read and love Shakespeare before we concern ourselves with his various readings; and I cannot see why it should be otherwise with books written in Greek or Latin.

As it is the method of nature that the child shall pick up a store of words, and shall excellently arrange them by ear and intuition, before

he can construe and analyse his own arrangement, the gradual method of acquiring any language, ancient or modern, is obviously the right one ; but pedagogues were then too remote from nature to refresh themselves with her pure wisdom.

Two friends belong particularly to this time, and both were of special assistance to him in his study of Greek, while one of them rendered him a service of far more vital value. Both gentlemen lived at Banchory : one was Dr Adams of Banchory House, and the other was the Rev. William Anderson, then Established Church minister of the place. The first was a man so devoted to Greek that he held all modern literature in mean esteem, and accused even Shakespeare of plagiarising from classics which the great dramatist could not have read. He could repeat long odes of Pindar without a pause, and put a solemnity into these recitations which savoured of the pulpit. Indeed Greek was his religion, for in so far as he had imbibed modern culture at all, it was culture of the school of Voltaire. There is no doubt that he was the finest Greek scholar in Scotland, although his life of retirement, and his hostility to creeds and churches, withheld from public recognition and usefulness both his attainments and his influence. John Blackie's ardour pleased him, and he had long felt the same contempt for the



Greek of Scottish Universities which the younger man had brought red-hot from the Continent, so that the two fell into a sympathetic intimacy, which served to cherish the vigorous saplings of scholastic ambition and educational reform planted by Göttingen and watered at Rome.

It is clear, however, that the Voltairianism which Dr Adams professed was beneficial in rousing to a militant attitude that dormant faith in the spiritual life which had latterly lain low in John Blackie's mind. It had been smothered by the conclusions of critical research, those premature conclusions of an incomplete research; but these had only succeeded in extinguishing dogmas of men, which ranked then, as they rank still, in divers creeds devised by divers Churches, on the same level as the Word which was from the beginning.

In confirming his hold of the latter, the minister of Banchory proved of timely value. Mr Anderson, who belonged rather to the Evangelical than to the Moderate party of the Church of Scotland, was both a scholar and a man of wide culture at a time when general culture was rare in Scotland. He took an interest in philology, and welcomed at first approach the light which Sanscrit threw upon that study, and his talk was full of matters hitherto outside John Blackie's ken.

Eager to learn, the latter was attracted into an intimacy with the minister, whose "fine harmony of intellectual and moral gifts" gave him a wholesome ascendancy, and he proved able to convince his young friend of many a crude conclusion, as well as to recognise his power and promise. It was this quiet candour, at once sympathetic and critical, which gave him influence over the fervid mind accustomed to snubs from the Moderates and Evangelicals. Upon these parties plunged in the blinding fray John Blackie was apt to retort with derisive laughter, for their polemics testified to neither wisdom nor charity. But Mr Anderson took no part in the controversy, and kept his even way, doing his proper work at Banchory, an Evangelical in heart and life, and when the great split of 1843 filled the air with its rancours, leaving the Church for a chair in the College at Agram.

Only one incident, initiating a new departure for John Blackie, occurred during his six months' stay at home. This was the visit of Lord Brougham to Belhelvie and Aberdeen in the spring of 1832. The Blackies met him on several occasions, and at a banquet given by the Aberdonians in his honour, John Blackie was put forward to make one of the after-dinner speeches. The subject allotted to him was the part which Lord Brougham was taking

in spreading intelligence among the people. It was his first public speech, but no further record of its matter remains. Of its manner he wrote in the "Notes":—

I recollect only that it was fervid and hasty and violent. The words came rushing through my throat like a number of disorderly persons pushing through the narrow entrance to the pit on a benefit night at the theatre. I was fluent, however, and did not stick. One sentence begat another in a rough, hasty sort of way. No doubt the violent hurry which I displayed was partly from fervour of temperament, but partly also from the embarrassment which I felt at opening my mouth before a large audience of persons much my superior in years and experience.

## CHAPTER VII.

## YEARS OF STRUGGLE.

1832-1837.

IN the spring of 1832 John Blackie established himself in Edinburgh, and began to read for the Scottish Bar. His lodgings were in Lauriston during the first year of his legal studies, but later he removed to more convenient quarters in Dublin Street. His wooing of the legal muse was both distasteful and unsuccessful in the preliminary stages. He found Bell and Erskine the driest and least intelligible of reading. Gifted and brilliant, his head a very beehive of ambitious fancies, theories, and reforms in active competition with sentiment, and all clamorous for articulate expression, he felt stupefied in the presence of the stereotyped and ancient Themis. To persevere at all needed a courage stimulated

by intervals of dalliance with the more attractive Muses. But he made manful efforts, and sought admission into a lawyer's office, that he might the better conquer the dull terminology of the law.

The gentleman who helped him through the perplexities of bonds and bills was a Mr Alexander, a Writer to the Signet, well versed in their dreary details. His first valuable lesson was to reduce his pupil to a salutary sense of his own ignorance. This incident is told in the "Notes":—

I remember shortly after I entered his office he brought me in a bundle of law papers, and ordered me to read them and give a legal opinion on the merits of the case. I did so with great speed, took my view with decision, and on being asked, gave a distinct deliverance that "the law of the case was quite clear—there could not possibly be two opinions on the point." This was exactly the kind of answer that he expected, so, looking me sharply in the face, he said, "Mr Blackie, whenever I hear a young advocate declare that there is no difficulty in the case, I have no difficulty in declaring that he knows nothing about his business."

This plain speaking was most wholesome for the head a little turned by attainments and speculations which were unusual in the Edinburgh of that time, and which gained for him not merely a very marked social success, but also the auguries of experienced seniors that he

would achieve a distinguished career. So he set himself to work to copy papers and to learn slowly and painfully the alphabet of legal lore.

His letters home during the three years which belong to this stage speak to his repugnance for the study of law; and one written to Mr Anderson of Banchory in the autumn of 1832 gave that wise friend some reason to fear that his perseverance would give way. Mr Anderson wrote on November 5:—

I sincerely hope the knot is tied, which will never be loosed, unless by what *you* would call an inevitable fate—I, Providence—so that it may not be said in your biography (and I doubt not, if you adhere to the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, you will yet have a biographer), “In 1832 he resolved upon devoting himself to law as a profession, but soon gave up the pursuit.” You may yet be the Lord Advocate, and I—grown stiff with age—may be your humble suitor for a Hebrew Professorship in Aberdeen or St Andrews. But without joke, I am glad you have fixed upon what opens to you a career of honourable and useful employment. You will experience, I doubt not, that man fulfils the conditions of a happy existence only when actively employed in the duties of life. And, my dear sir, supposing you attain every worldly object upon which the powers of humanity are fitted to exercise themselves, still, believe me, there would exist an aching void which only the supernatural, the perfect and the infinite, God and heaven, could fill. Though I scarce expect that you and I should be at one on religious subjects, yet I cannot help expressing my

great anxiety that on the creed, scanty as it may be, which you allow, you should lay fast hold. "Keep it, for it is thy life."

In the few letters which remain of this time, John Blackie can scarcely be said to have gratified the passion of his family for details. Even the pleasant social life to which his evenings were devoted is dismissed with mere dates and addresses; but we gather from this meagre record that he dined out nearly every evening, and that amongst his hosts were Sir William Hamilton, Professor Wilson, Mr Blackwood, Mr Wyld, Mr Bell, and other citizens of note. In a letter to his sister Christina he describes in turn a bevy of her special friends in Edinburgh, emphasising their graces and gifts as they appear to him, and his criticisms indicate his decided preference for a calm and stately deportment in women rather than for lively and varied manners. He was still very sensitive to feminine charm, but fluttered from one attractive lady to another, comparing all with his ideal and even with the half-forgotten Clotilda at Rome, and finding all short of perfection.

We come on the traces of genial suppers with his fellow-students for the Bar, when rousing talk and song sped the hours to midnight, and when

all who could contributed their own humours, declaimed or sung. For one of these occasions he prepared his "Give a Fee," and sang it to the tune of "Buy a Broom," with a great consensus of mind and voice in the ringing chorus. It is too long for full quotation, but the first stanza may be given :—

"O listen, ye bankers and merchants and doctors all ;  
O listen, ye old wealthy nabobs, to me ;  
O listen, ye bishops and deans and tithe-proctors all,  
And give to a poor starving lawyer a fee.  
Give a fee, give a fee, give a fee ;  
And give to a poor starving lawyer a fee.

*Chorus.* O my first fee, my first fee, my first fee ;  
O when wilt thou tinkle so sweet to my ear ?  
Months I wait, years I wait,  
But all in vain I wait ;  
O my dear first fee, when wilt thou appear ?"

But in spite of the acceptance which he enjoyed in Edinburgh at one of its most brilliant social epochs, when its claims to be called the Modern Athens rested far more on its attitude towards art and literature, on the oratory of its platforms and the sparkling talk of its dinner-tables, than on the buildings which imitate remotely the perfect structures of the ancient capital of Greece, he was deeply dissatisfied with his life and its issues. In a letter to his sister written early in 1833 he says :—



I have been lately very much discontented with myself and the superficial halfliness of my own attainments. I feel, too, a great disproportion between my ideas of what should be done and what I am doing. I hope this crisis will soon be over. I have made an irrevocable vow to do nothing by halves, and I long with an unquenchable longing to escape from my present state of intellectual minority.

It was a crisis common to all honest men, who, having realities in view and not mere seeming, are discountenanced again and again, when they make up their accounts, to find that fractions and not integers are the stuff of which the sum of their best efforts is composed. The integer is reached at last, but seldom shows itself wholly in the life which ends by fulfilling it. The fractions are for us, the integers go into the keeping of God, who makes the just spirit perfect.

The great effort of the year 1833 was the translation of Goethe's 'Faust.' John Blackie spent much of his leisure in the Advocates' Library, consulting old books on the black art, and making extracts from them for the notes appended to his translation. Sir William Hamilton, Professor Wilson, and the poet "Delta" took helpful interest in the work, and directed his attention to earlier renderings of the great romantic tragedy by Leveson Gower, by Hayward, and by Syme. He revised his own translation, care-

fully comparing it with these, but retaining the robuster forms into which his mind moulded the scenes meant to be plainly expressed. He was less occupied with finding verbal equivalents for the parts than with offering a fresh and living presentment of the whole. In the Preface he stated the principle on which he translated the poem :—

The great principle on which the excellence of a poetical translation depends seems to be, that it should not be a mere *transposing*, but a *recasting* of the original. On this principle it has been my first and chief endeavour to make my translation spirited,—to seize, if possible, the very soul and living power of the German, rather than to give a careful and anxious transcription of every individual line or every minute expression.

His researches in the Advocates' Library gave him a store of material concerning the historical basis of 'Faust,' of which he made good use in the introduction, appending to his explanatory remarks a sketch of the plan and the moral of Goethe's masterpiece, and giving his reasons for confining the translation to the First Part. He considered that the Second Part, or sequel, instead of being necessary for the harmonious development of the first, was a disturbing and incongruous afterthought, and infringed upon the unity and deep significance of the drama.

The translation, accompanied by notes and preliminary remarks, was placed in Messrs Blackwood's hands towards the end of the year, and appeared in print in the February of 1834.

Its success, as a piece of excellent literary work, was marked. It had faults of style, and occasionally failed in accuracy of rendering. Acting upon his principle of recasting the original, he had omitted here and there a phrase; had given some essentially German thought a form suited to home circulation, but inadequate to its character; had failed perhaps to find an English equivalent for some sturdy and fore-shortened utterance, and had weakened it in elongation. But it must be remembered that English was the language which he had studied least, and that his very mode of thought was German, since to the Germans he owed the development of his power of independent thinking, —a process which, before he went to Göttingen, was a mere confused brooding over the empirical dicta of others.

Criticism he received in plenty from friends, who, enamoured of Byron, revolted against Goethe's calm presentment of the conflict between good and evil in man, and of the paradoxes which it involved, preferring Byron's revolt, not against evil, but against suffering—

a revolt to which his impassioned verse lends a lurid splendour blinding and baleful to this day. But these friends were not critical of his work, but jealous of his preference for Faust to Manfred, and all agreed in praising the spirit and impressiveness of his translation. Of its truthfulness few of these friendly critics were in a position to judge, but he received a letter from Thomas Carlyle, who had already given to the world his 'Life of Schiller,' and whose deep knowledge of German literature made the words of appreciation with which he endorsed John Blackie's translation of virtue to seal its worth. This letter is too interesting to omit :—

CRAIGENPUTTOCK, 28th April 1834.

MY DEAR SIR,—I must no longer delay to thank you for the welcome present of your 'Faust,' the more welcome from your kind manner of bestowing it. I have been so busy that time for a patient comparison with the original would never yet offer itself; meanwhile, in looking over your book many spirited passages have struck me; and as yet only one error: the vague couplet, *Die Gegenwart von einem braven Knaben*; in which it is much easier to say that you and others are wrong than who or what is right. I advised Hayward to make it in his second edition: "The present time by (in the hands of) a fellow of ability," but that also only satisfies me on the ground that with Goethe himself rhyme would sometimes have its way.

For rhymes the rudder are of verses,  
With which like ships they steer their courses.

The newspapers, I perceive, acknowledge your merits and endeavours in a hearty style; which is all one can expect of criticism at present. Let us hope your labours in the German vineyard, which has much lack of honest hands, are but beginning yet, and will lead you to richer and richer results.

Of your Preface and prose notes I can speak deliberately and in terms of great commendation. There is a spirit of openness, of free recognition and appropriation, which I love much, which I reckon far more precious than any specialty of talent or acquired skill, inasmuch as that is the root of all talent and all skill. Keep an "open sense," an eye for the "*Offne Geheimniss*," which so few discern! With this much is possible, without it as good as nothing.

For the rest, that I must dissent from you somewhat both in regard to the First and the Second Part of 'Faust' is but a small matter. We agree in spirit; this itself is an agreement to let each take his own way in details. Could you but have as much tolerance for me in this new heresy, which I, alas! feel growing upon me of late years, that 'Faust' is intrinsically but a small poem, perhaps the smallest of Goethe's main works; recommending itself to the sorrow-struck, sceptical feeling of these times, but for Time at large of very limited value! Such, I profess not without reluctance, is the sentiment that has long breathed in me; moreover, of the two I find considerably more meaning in the *Second Part*! *Favete linguis*. At the same time I can well enter into your enthusiasm, and again read 'Faust' along with you like a new Apocalypse, for in that way I read it once already. Ten years hence you shall tell me how it is.

We are leaving this boggy Patmos, and getting under way for London. It will give me true pleasure to hear of

you; to hear that you advance successfully in all kinds of well-doing. There is no young literary man about Edinburgh from whom more is to be expected. When you come southward, you will see us? Do not fail if you would please us.—With the heartiest good wishes and thanks, I remain always, my dear sir, faithfully yours,

THOMAS CARLYLE.

It appears from this letter that John Blackie had already made the acquaintance of Mr and Mrs Carlyle, and we gather from his correspondence with Mr Jonathan Bell that during their stay in Edinburgh in 1833 he had spent more than one evening with them.

This translation of 'Faust' took its place as the best and most truthful rendering of the poem hitherto made public, but later it was superseded by Sir Theodore Martin's version, which John Blackie himself considered better than his own. George Henry Lewes, however, ranked the earlier translation highly, and used it in the passages from 'Faust' which he quoted in his 'Life of Goethe.' He says: "I shall generally follow Blackie's translation. Of the poetical translations it is the best and closest I have seen, and it has valuable notes."

His absorption with Goethe's poem, and with the researches necessary for its elucidation, brought about an inevitable access of fatigue

and temporary distaste to the whole subject, and we find that he turned for a time to a poet of very different temper, to regain from him that equilibrium of mind and spirit, maintained on the one hand by a wide and generous outlook upon life, on the other by stern reflection and self-examination. This poet was William Wordsworth, and for some years John Blackie found his pure and introspective teaching of power to aid his own study of the forces which he found within himself, and which it was a main endeavour to marshal in practicable order for active service. The language, too, of the Lake poet impressed him with its chosen and delicate fitness, and in view of his need of English influences, he sought to learn from it all that it could yield of help. But the difference between the disciple and the teacher was too great, for, coupled with the tendency to introspection which he had in common with Wordsworth, John Blackie had an imperious impulse to know and be known of his fellow-men. He says in the "Notes":—

As richness and variety of life opened upon me, I found that the great laker, though the first of moral teachers among his own green hills, was narrow and one-sided, and infected strongly with that moral egoism that no persons can escape who live mainly from within, and who can see

nothing in nature or art without impressing on it their own engrossing idiosyncrasy. Wordsworth was too much of a preacher for my idea of a wise poet; he sympathised with man rather than with men. He never could get quit of himself and his own philosophical position. For this reason, after a while, I was obliged to discard him, as I had ever found my greatest improvement to arise from a thorough going out of my natural groove, and receiving into my life as much as possible of the lives and characters of others.

During the first half of 1834 he set himself with desperate industry to the study of law. It was the last year of the three for which his father had made provision, and the crisis was rapidly approaching which should set him face to face with that ruthless but most wholesome test of worth, the capacity to earn his daily bread. He was determined, when the probationary years were at an end, to stand the test, but he knew by this time that Law would hardly prove for him a fount of perennial supply. This conviction was no fruit of idleness, for he left nothing undone which could commend him to the notice of his seniors, or could fit and polish his powers.

We find him in this year a member of the Speculative and Juridical Societies, which form the nursing-grounds of Scottish oratory, forensic and political. The free controversy of the Speculative, whose members are chiefly young lawyers



in training for their profession, invigorates and concentrates both thought and utterance, and has given to many a public speaker the valuable lessons of reserve and emphasis which made his speeches weighty in later life. About 1834 a group of youthful stalwarts pitted minds and lungs against each other in lively rhetorical contest. They were men destined to fill the highest seats of law and learning in Scotland, and some of them to achieve a wider fame than belonged to Bar and Bench at home.

William Aytoun, John Gordon, Edward Horsman, James Moncreiff, and Archibald Campbell Swinton were the leaders of this group. The two first belonged to the little court of wits and poets over which Christopher North so royally presided. They were soon to become his sons-in-law, and were well inoculated with all his enthusiasms, real and robust as well as purely romantic. They brought into the arena not only the caustic and somewhat reckless humour of their circle, but also its wealth of allusion and play of wit, its grace of impromptu eloquence, that indescribable quality mingled of romance and good sense, which was its *cachet*. Of the two, Gordon was the more finished orator, and his wit was less sarcastic than that of Aytoun, who spoke seldom, but gave evidence when he

did so of powers which his diffidence restrained from reaching their proper distinction. These two formed the formidable section of the audience for a new and untried speaker; but there were other men less varied mentally and less original, but careful and clear as speakers, and less inclined, because perhaps less able, to swoop down upon the blunders and inadequacies of their opponents. Such were Moncreiff and Swinton. Moncreiff had considerable weight in the Speculative, having mastered the manner of public speaking so far that his appearances were always successful, and in later life, when Lord Advocate, speaking with effect and dignity in the House of Commons.

John Blackie felt the difficulty of taking a worthy place amongst these practised debaters; but he had not joined the Society for the mere purpose of gracing its benches, so on the very first night of his membership he rose, in a fever of shyness and impulse, to take part in the proceedings. No survival of the matter discussed remains, and we only know that his contribution was rather a torrent of nervous sentences than a well-weighed speech. But he felt that if he sat dumb on the first night, he would remain dumb for the rest of his membership, and so in duty to himself he spoke. We can well imagine the rapid

utterance, the fresh phrasing, the quaint epithets, the laugh and gesture of "German Blackie" as he was called, but we can also imagine the stir which his appearance provoked, and the promise of a new and rousing element to quicken the mettle of established debaters.

There seems to be some reason for believing that his sense of justice at this time took offence at the Edinburgh Whigs, for Jeffrey's notorious review on Wordsworth exposed the party to a ridicule which some of its members heartily deserved. The deep interest with which he was reading the poet led John Blackie to resent the article, which, like the burning of the Ephesian temple, has immortalised its perpetrator. And we learn from his correspondence that Liberal friends reproached him with a temporary relapse. But all that was brilliant in Scotland then was produced by Tories, or was connected with men who professed to be Tories, perhaps less on political than on romantic grounds. The quickest-witted people in Edinburgh, and the most attractive to a young man bent on mental development, made profession of a quasi-medieval Toryism, which served them as a treasure-trove of poetical material. Their attitude was mainly sentimental, but it became heroic when Whigs pretended to bludgeon a

poet whom their prose-drugged senses could not discern, and whom the Tory poets hailed with reverence and delight. It was entirely natural that John Blackie should recoil from the Whigs of the 'Edinburgh Review.' But it does credit to one of those Whigs, James Moncreiff, that he should have overlooked the petulance of this recoil, and should have given the new speaker courage by kindly words of praise on the occasion of this first speech.

The Juridical Society was less to his mind. Here the members were, with a few notable exceptions, mere lawyers, whose dry, cool, unimpassioned treatment of subjects exclusively legal fatigued a mind too fervidly human to find any attraction whatever in punctilio and terms of law. Here he learned that of all men there he was the least adapted to the profession of the Bar. Its "terms of process" were hieroglyphics to which he had no key. The other members of the Juridical spoke them glibly, and glibly apprehended them, found them humorous at times, found depths in them and subtleties which graced their speeches and won applause,—a marvel to John Blackie, for whom their habit of mind was impossible, and to whose ears their speeches were very tedium. The one exception, the Saul amongst these legal prophets, was

Henry Glassford Bell. Of him Professor Blackie wrote long afterwards :—

Besides his literary and popular powers, he had a wonderful sagacity, a capacity for law work and for social enjoyment equally large, a natural eye for business in a man of such remarkable imaginative power quite uncommon.

But although he realised with sincere disappointment the antipathy of his mind to the work which had become his first duty, he wrestled bravely with its difficulties, pored over its text-books, interleaving them for notes, and shouted aloud its abhorred formulas, as in happier days he had shouted the sounding anathemas of Cicero and the patriotic diatribes of Demosthenes. When his books dealt with the broad uses of law and with its larger organisation, he grasped their contents eagerly : but the numberless details, which seem to be excrescences rather than organic parts ; the vast and grotesque vocabulary ; the labyrinth of vexatious punctilio ; the prehistoric deposit which forms the substratum of Scots Law,—these provoked and repulsed him. Nevertheless he worked well enough to pass the various stages guarded by examination, and to be admitted as a member of the Faculty of Advocates on July 1, 1834.

From this time for five years he mixed with

his fellows in the Parliament House, and was often the centre of one of its liveliest groups. But he held only two briefs during these years, and he had frequent occasion to sing "Give a Fee" with rueful emphasis as they passed.

The last year of his allowance expired with 1834, and left him carolling in vain. He was determined to make no appeal to his father's generosity, on which he had already drawn sufficiently. It became him to make good his promises, and he was eager and able to do so. From 1835 he supported himself, and if he found it hard to do so, he endured his difficulties gladly. The success of his translation of 'Faust' gave him access to the pages of 'Blackwood's Magazine' and of the 'Foreign Quarterly Review.' Both periodicals were willing to accept what he was most ready to offer, articles introducing and reviewing the works of German writers.

In 1835 he wrote for 'Blackwood's Magazine' a paper on Jean Paul Richter, including many well-translated quotations and a version of the "Legend of the Lorelei"; for the 'Foreign Quarterly Review,' a paper on Menzel's 'German Literature,' and one on Goethe's 'Correspondence with Zelter and Bettina Brentano.' These, with some columns written for journals of secondary importance, brought him £97 for the year 1835, a

sum nearly equivalent to his allowance. But the following years, although yielding sufficient money to pay his wants, fell short of this sum, and he was often painfully confronted with the rude fact that the world pays better the dull but essential labour employed in its material wellbeing than the exercise of fresh and willing powers for its mental advance.

In 1836 John Blackie contributed to the 'Foreign Quarterly Review' a paper on Prince Pückler's 'New Tour,' and one on Eckermann's 'Conversations with Goethe,' and wrote other reviews of which it is unnecessary now to recover the traces.

He kept himself afloat with good-humoured courage, and played his part cheerily, as became a philosopher and a student of Greek. It is evident from the titles of some of his articles that he had resumed the study of Greek, which his reading for the Bar had interrupted. The fit of Wordsworthian fervour had passed away, and Goethe had resumed his ascendancy over a nature in which the latent possibilities were too varied to be long subjected to the empire of an influence more isolating than enlarging. He returned to Goethe with relief, recognising in him the working of that Hellenism which he was learning to appreciate at first hand, the large

tolerance, the appreciation of "all things lovely and of good report," the moderation in judgment and in action, the making for "equipoise of soul."

The Greek and Goethian "equipoise" was scarcely attainable by John Stuart Blackie, who was bound to colour every new result of his ethical education with fervent piety. His nature contained elements capable, indeed, of reaching "equipoise," but rather through the "Learn of me" of his Greek Testament than through the irresponsible development of the Greeks, or the elaborate self-culture of their German imitators. Still, in some things he achieved a conscious resemblance to his models, never perfect because it was marred by feelings which they did not possess, whose workings counteracted his tranquillity. He donned a panoply of calm against "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," but had no gift of native invulnerability.

We do not know much of his life during these two years. His lodgings were in York Place or Dublin Street, and he entertained his friends to supper now and again. His gift of versifying was often called upon to distinguish, by appropriate squib or lyric, some festal gathering, and a handful of such songs remains, sung in their day to good old Scottish tunes.



“A Song of Good Fellows” commemorates the Juridical Society in the session from 1834 to 1835, and is a humorous roll-call of its members. It begins:—

I'll sing you a song of no ancient date,  
 A good song of mighty good fellows,  
 With good hammering heads and good thundering hands,  
 And lungs like a good blowing bellows.  
 I'll sing you a song of good honest members  
 And presidents of a Society  
 That is famed for its learning, its wit, and its taste,  
 And for everything good but sobriety.

We can imagine the laughter which the neat portraits drew from all; and the singer did not spare himself:—

Then B—keye, strange jumble of nonsense and sense,  
 A thing half a song, half a sermon;  
 I believe that the fellow is made of good stuff,  
 But his noddle is muddled with German.  
 Our wits he'd fain daze with his big foreign phrase,  
 His cant of “immutable reason,”  
 To Bray like an ass, while for gods they would pass,  
 With your German *savans* is no treason.

A drinking-song levelled at the professions—medicine, law, theology, learning—expresses an epicurean contempt for their futility, and celebrates the superior philosophy of “wine, woman, and song.”

A graver ditty invites to “Sociality and Activ-

ity” on more temperate grounds, and this is a lyric of sufficient beauty to be quoted fully:—

The world drives on and we drive with it,  
 And none its course may stay ;  
 When the swarm alights, we must hive with it,  
 And with it we must away.  
 In vain does son of man conceive  
 His single self so great ;  
 No act of mortal can deceive  
 The measured chart of Fate.  
     Then away, away, adown the stream  
     With others let us go,  
     With friendly heart to share with them  
     Their cup of weal or woe.

When shines the sun, when falls the rain,  
 The cotter wends his plough ;  
 When blows the wind, when rolls the main,  
 The sailor bends his prow.  
 The heart is glad, the heart is sad,  
 As time and chance allow ;  
 And happy never will he be  
 Who is not happy now.  
     Then away, away, &c.

In vain, in vain we cast our eye  
 Into the dreary void ;  
 What was, what is to be, God veils  
 From ken of human pride.  
 He gave thine eye to see His light,  
 He gave thy blood to flow,  
 He gave thy hand to work with might  
 The work of life below.  
     Then away, away, &c.

'Tis now a race, 'tis now a march,  
Now quick, and now 'tis slow ;  
'Tis now a proud triumphal arch,  
And now a cottage low.  
But still and still it drives along,  
And none its course may stay ;  
Where the swarm alights, we must hive with it,  
And with it we must away.  
Then away, away, &c.

Amongst his frequent companions about this time were his cousin Robert Wyld and a member of the Juridical Society, Robert Horn, who afterwards became Dean of Faculty. Dr Wyld records the little supper-parties in Dublin Street, where a "rizzared haddie" and a tumbler of toddy formed the time-honoured fare ; for these were the days when Edinburgh still dined at four o'clock and supped lightly at nine, putting a kindly hospitality within the reach of all. They were the days, moreover, when guests brought with them the will to enjoy, and when neither host nor guest was so overpowered by the needless needs of a modern dinner that the courses stifled the talk. The memory of those suppers, when a dish of oysters and a haddock prefaced the steaming kettle and the ladles, still lingers in Edinburgh ; but wealth, alas ! has elected to migrate to its crescents and terraces, and to pile its dull fashions like a tumulus upon the old picturesque

hospitality. Men came to talk, not to eat, and much excellent thinking had its apotheosis in acute or humorous give and take while the toddy-ladle made its guarded journey from rummer to glass.

It must have been in the summer of 1836 that John Blackie and Robert Wyld made a pedestrian tour along the south shore of the Firth of Forth, by Tantallon Castle to Berwick, up the valley of the Tweed to Kelso, and home by St Boswells, Minto, Galashiels, and Dalkeith. The tour was uneventful, their pockets were thinly lined, and they had to give up the Bass Rock in face of the greedy demands of the fishermen at Canty Bay; they breakfasted with Dr Aitken at Minto Manse, and made thence for Galashiels. By that time John Blackie's shoes struck work and had to be given up. Their combined funds were a mere remnant to be husbanded for bread and cheese. A new pair of shoes was impossible, so Robert Wyld surrendered his slippers, some sizes too big for his slender cousin, who shuffled along the coach-road to Dalkeith sombrely preoccupied by the effort to keep them on.

Another excursion in the following year introduced him to Bannockburn. His friend Robert Horn accompanied him this time. Mr Horn's home lay about three miles from Falkirk, and made a pleasant stage to which the travellers

could return from their patriotic wanderings in its neighbourhood.

They left Edinburgh on the 21st of July, taking the coach through Linlithgow to Carronvale, and visiting the iron-works two miles down the stream, whose bordering of pale willows reminded John Blackie of the sad-coloured oliveyards of Italy. From Carronvale they made daily excursions to the various places hallowed by the memory of William Wallace, the hero of the little scholar at Merson's Academy, Graeme's tomb at Falkirk, Torwood Forest where Wallace lurked for shelter and vantage-ground, the remnants of Bruce's castle on a low wooded hill five miles north of Carronvale. Bannockburn and Stirling were got by heart. From Stirling the friends went forward on July 26, by the winding Forth, up the Teith, through Blair-Drummond to Doune. Here they halted, and came in for a campaigning speech by Mr Fox Maule to the electors of Doune. They visited the castle, and set out for Dunblane, stopping at the "salmon cruive" on the Allan to make a note of its construction. Rain greeted them at Dunblane, and followed them as they wandered to the "Bikes," to Blairlogie and Tillicoultry, but did not greatly spoil their enjoyment of the wooded Ochils.

They reserved the ascent of Ben Cleugh, the highest Ochil, for the following day, when the rain ceased. The hill, which rises just north of Tillicoultry, has a height of 2500 feet, but is not difficult to climb. Mist clung to its top, but parted as they climbed, and they gazed over its riven wreaths to the sunlight landscape below. They returned to Tillicoultry, and made their way to Kinross and to Turfhill, where they found rest and hospitality. On the last day of July the excursion ended, and they went back to Edinburgh by Dunfermline and the steamer.

This walking tour is worthy of the foregoing detail, because it was noted by John Stuart Blackie in later life as having roused to a very marked degree the stirrings of his nature, which were sacred to Scottish influences and to Scottish associations. If Germany made a conquest of his mind, his heart belonged then and always to Scotland, and German thinking was vivified, illumined, and rectified by Scottish feeling.

The short diary which he kept of the ten days' movements includes no mention of his companions, but it seems certain that another young advocate, to be afterwards well known as the kindly and humorous Sheriff Logan, joined the friends before they left Carronvale.

They seem to have made a geological survey of the valleys and hill-ranges which they traversed, and every feature has its appropriate comment, basalt, trap, and sandstone, every volcanic hollow on the hills, every winding of the sauntering Forth, the springs upon the Ochils, the lines of their billowy slopes.

Another friend of those years was Mr Theodore Martin, who records of John Blackie that his life of strenuous industry, of genial and grateful temper, and of stainless purity, made him a model and example for his comrades in the struggle.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE TEST ACTS.

1837-1840.

AN invitation from Robert Wyld took John Blackie to Fifeshire some time in the autumn of 1837. Mr Wyld of Bonnington Bank had bought the property of Gilston, and spent the greater part of the year within its pleasant precincts. His family was large, consisting of seven sons and five daughters, of whom the three eldest, Isabella, Marion, and Eliza, had reached young womanhood. The younger members of the family tailed off into the schoolroom and nursery by gradual descent. The girls, who had burst the chrysalis of schoolroom routine, leaving Mangnall in unconsidered shreds behind them, were tall and straight as young firs; and the tallest and straightest of the three was the



youngest, Eliza. She resembled her father both in person and nature, was physically slender and swift, with plentiful fair hair and blue eyes, from which there rayed a ceaseless revelation of the proud, sensitive, loving, striving, strong, and noble soul within. She had reached her eighteenth year, loved her tender-hearted father loyally, stood somewhat in awe of her reserved and methodical mother, felt the upgrowth of intellectual cravings hard to satisfy at home,—of energies and emotions unemployed and unregarded.

When he arrived, John Blackie gravitated towards this cousin naturally and without loss of time. He looked ill, and was badly dressed; for then, as ever, his necessities were books, not coats and ties, and as he had not yet paid his yearly visit to Aberdeen, his wardrobe was in arrears for want of feminine touches and supplements. But he was quite unconscious of these defects, and was all his life prone to constant fresh surprise, when the “ever womanly” discerned the wear and tear in a habitual garment.

He was the most living, the most intellectual, the most rousing person whom Eliza Wyld had ever met, and it was no wonder that they drew together in mutual sympathy. She represented his ideal more nearly than any woman for whom he had felt a passing attraction; her stateliness of

height and manner, her eyes telling in splendid sincerity the story of a nature too strong and far-reaching to veil itself in flimsy reserves, her eager interest in his interest, her generous appreciation of his powers and possibilities, all formed an irresistible magnet, and he sought her society from morning to night.

A tradition lingers of a dance at Gilston which happened during his visit, and in which he could take no part, for the measured formalities of a tedious quadrille were impossible to one who could have danced with nymphs and fauns to the rhythm of the winds, but who laughed the dull reiterations of the ballroom to scorn. But his cousin had no escape from her duties, so it was arranged between them that he should sit in the recess of a window, and that at the close of every dance she should come back to him and mitigate the weary hours.

At last the mother's eyes opened to the fact of John's absorbed attention to the daughter. He was twenty-eight years old—had a profession, it is true; but what are briefless advocates? He was badly dressed, and Mrs Wyld was decorous in details; he looked ill, because a touch of old ailments had roughened his skin with a passing eruption; and as for his talents, they were reprehensible, of foreign extraction, heterodox, and un-

profitable. So poor John Blackie was bidden go, and the cousins had to part,—although with mutual promise of a constant friendship.

John went to Aberdeen to spend the months which remained of his autumnal holiday at home. It seems to have been during this time that a clever young sculptor, Alexander Ritchie, who had already made an excellent portrait bust of "Delta," and who died in the very dawn of his reputation, attracted by the "ethereal outline" of his features, asked leave to model the translator of 'Faust.' John Blackie sat to him in Marischal Street, and the bust remains, the only likeness that we have of him at the stage of young manhood. It gives the clear-cut features, the upward poise of his head, the tone of thought, the gravity and gentleness of his face in repose, and has, besides, that touch of poetic distinction which reveals enthusiasm and insight in the artist.

Its subject returned to Edinburgh to spend the winter of 1837 and the whole of 1838 in the old struggle for existence, disappointed at the Bar, laborious at his desk, with vivacious quip and jest in society, but with anxiety gnawing at his heart when he faced his prospects in solitude.

His chief articles for 1838 were one on "Jung Stilling and the Religious Literature of Ger-

many," and one on "Müller's Eumenides and English and German Scholarship," both for the 'Foreign Quarterly Review.'

The latter was an attack on the whole school of English scholars, and boldly contrasted their industry and learning with those of German classical students. It was written hastily and perhaps rashly, but secured considerable attention.

He was occupied with Greek once more, and had begun a translation of the dramas of Æschylus. This work involved research into many questions which naturally belonged to it, and amongst these he took special pains with the interesting subject of metre, and particularly of Greek metre and music. Encouraged by Sir William Hamilton, he produced a long and valuable article, written in 1838, and published in the 'Foreign Quarterly Review' for July 1839, under the title of "Greek Rhythms and Metres."

This comprehensive study implied the purchase of many books, and their cost would have made havoc with his precarious income had not an occasional draft from Mr Blackie provided for this scholarly outlay, and left to his son the satisfaction of keeping body and soul together with the fees for his articles. This process, too, was fortified by frequent hampers from home. His work provoked a rhymed "Fantasy" of gods

and goddesses, which indicates a transient inoculation from the manner of Keats and Shelley, as well as an effort to steep himself in Hellenic imaginings, and so refresh and support his understanding of the great dramatist.

The too ample leisure which his profession allotted to him was filled, therefore, with strenuous work and aims, and in a direction which was happily the right one for his career, although at one time he was distressed with sore misgivings on the subject. This conflict between his mental bent and his distasteful duties has frequent expression in his letters. In August 1836 he wrote to his father :—

I have still very serious doubts whether there are not certain natural defects in my mind which, along with the peculiarities of a self-conducted education, must for ever prevent me from rising to any eminence at the Bar. When to this I add the want of toughness in my physical constitution, and the overbalance of fire and feeling in my temperament, I am justified in not entertaining any very sanguine hope of my future success. But these anticipations of the *future* have, of course, nothing to do with my *present* duty, and I hope I shall be able to work on, notwithstanding the discouraging feelings that sometimes arise within me, as happily and as laboriously as if I were in my own natural province—man and morals. The slowness with which Law gets into my stupid head is quite humiliating, and the speed with which it gets out again is remarkable.

This conflict lasted during the two years which followed, and on March 6, 1838, he thus sought the counsel of a friend :—

I have long had secret misgivings about my capacity for exercising the duties of the profession for which I hang out: my education has been altogether speculative and not very systematic, and I fear also the natural turn of my mind is anything but practical. You will therefore perform me an act of essential friendship—and, I think, you are the only person in Edinburgh who can do it—if you will give me a sincere answer to the following questions:—

I. Whether you think there is anything in my character, my habit of mind, my natural capacities, that makes it almost a hopeless affair with me ever to attempt being a good lawyer?

II. Whether my deficiencies are sufficiently explicable on the theory of want of training in practical matters? No philosophy can teach a man to make a shoe.

III. If you think my defects not incurable, can you suggest to me any means by which they can be remedied? You may easily conceive how important a thing it is for me to have this matter cleared up. I will rather be a schoolmaster, though I hate the trade, than work for fees which I do not deserve. Therefore, as you love me, be *honest*, and say whatever you think is the truth. Your answer to the above questions may have a serious influence on my future fate and happiness.

We have no clue to this friend's answer; but perhaps it encouraged perseverance, as towards

the end of 1838 we find him writing to his father :—

I hope to keep soul and body together, which is all that any mortal man has a title to in the first place. As to the *Law*, I believe I could by a long pull and a strong pull get on in that way yet. I yield to no obstacles.

But this conflict between inclination and necessity was nearing its close, to give way to a conflict in which both were victoriously allied against a common foe.

Marischal College stood alone amongst universities in the humiliating distinction of possessing no Latin Chair. The endowment of such a chair had been recommended by Sir Robert Peel's University Commission, and Mr Alexander Bannerman, the Aberdeen member of Parliament, was anxious to promote the recommendation by his influence with the Whig Ministry of that time. He succeeded in persuading the Government to establish the chair, and almost simultaneously he secured, through Lord John Russell, the Queen's command that Government should consult his wishes as to the choice of its first occupant. Mr Bannerman was an old friend of Mr Blackie's, and kept up a correspondence with him, which was chiefly concerned with Whig doings and Radical misdoings. Mr Blackie acquainted his friend in London with John's occu-

pations and successes. The article on Greek Rhythm and its philosophy had made some stir, and Mr Bannerman was already aware of the writer's prestige as a Latinist. He asked him to send in testimonials of his fitness for a professorial post. These were amply forthcoming, signed by men eminent as scholars, amongst whom Sir William Hamilton, Professor Gerhard, and Professor Moir may be mentioned. They were deemed satisfactory; and Mr Bannerman's candidate received the appointment in May 1839, with the title of Regius Professor of Humanity in Marischal College. The question of emolument was not yet decided.

Dr Melvin, who had been made Rector of the Grammar-School in Aberdeen and Lecturer on Humanity in the College, was accounted the best Latinist of the city, and when the news of John Blackie's appointment arrived, his admirers were loud in denouncing what they declared to be a "Whig job." Melvin was a Tory, and although a minute and accurate grammarian, he belonged to the party in education wedded to old methods. Mr Bannerman sought to enlarge the scope and raise the standard of attainment in university teaching. His aim was one which Dr Melvin would have refused to further, while the younger man, who was appointed at his recommendation,



was possessed with a keen recognition of the failure of an outworn pedantry to make the young, ardent students of a literature human and historical, in which nations speak aloud across two millenniums. The instinct for this human element in Latin, which German teaching had fostered in John Blackie, qualified him for the chair more than his acquaintance with the language, because the chair was to be a step in advance, not a mere final stage of schoolmastering. It was to form a source of stimulus, to cherish a living scholarship, not to impose a coping-stone upon a crumbling structure. It was hardly to be expected that Mr Bannerman would undergo the toil of getting a new chair endowed by Government for the sake of filling it with a Professor opposed to his own progressive views in education, although it was most natural that Dr Melvin's friends, who were justified in admiring the excellence of his teaching, should protest against the appointment of a younger man.

The appointment was made, however, and John Blackie held her Majesty's commission in which it was embodied. But, as he said long after, "I found a hindrance—a pentagram—in my way, like Mephistopheles, in virtue of which he could not get out and I could not get in."

This hindrance was the Westminster Confes-

sion of Faith. It was incumbent on all professors, both theological and other than theological, to sign the Calvinistic clauses of this tough and wordy document. Propounded in 1647, ratified by the Act of Security, and incorporated in the Union Treaty in 1707, it was provided that "all professors shall acknowledge and profess and shall subscribe to the Confession of Faith as the confession of their faith"; and further, "shall practise and conform to the worship presently in use in the Church of Scotland, and submit to the government and discipline thereof."

It had been the custom of not wholly conforming professors to subscribe the Confession of Faith with a reservation, which may be termed historical. An excellent divine explained that "the Confession of Faith was a compromise between antagonistic parties, and was purposely so worded that one chapter contradicted the other; and besides, the section which declared the Bible to be the only rule of faith to Protestants, contradicted the whole." He advised John Blackie to sign without "impertinent scruples." But, with accustomed conscientiousness, the latter betook himself to study of the Confession. He describes the results of his study in the "Notes":—

At a distance I had seen no difficulty in the matter: it seemed to me that a theologian signed the articles in the

strict sense, a layman more loosely. But on a nearer view this difference vanished. To sign a creed was to say that you believed the creed—that the creed was yours. When this conviction first flashed upon me, I was horror-struck. I could not sign a Calvinist Confession of Faith without declaring myself a Calvinist: I could not sign any Confession of Faith without signing away my freedom of thought.

It seemed for a time as if there were no place in life for a man “who had sucked in the milk of truthfulness too long from the New Testament, to tolerate anything like double-dealing.” He had come to Aberdeen on receiving the appointment; he had written in the first flush of gratification to his friend and cousin to seek the sympathy in success which he had long enjoyed in struggle; he saw opening before him the very career of which he had dreamed in Göttingen and Rome. And on its threshold lay this sinister portent, this “pentagram.” It was impossible to subscribe. Father and friends urged every argument against his impracticable attitude. The example of Dr Paley, of countless clergymen whose lives declared their piety, was pressed upon him. At last a way was opened which promised an honest compromise. He could not subscribe *simpliciter*: he might subscribe with a declaration of his attitude, which, publicly made and publicly advertised, should in-

form those concerned that his subscription did not imply an avowal of the creed each clause expressed, but an agreement to respect that creed in the exercise of his professorial duties.

His signature had to be affixed in presence of the moderator and members of the Presbytery of Aberdeen. These met on July 2 at the East Church session-house in full conclave, and were duly constituted, the Rev. Adam Corbett being moderator. The varied business of this Presbytery meeting included its witness of John Stuart Blackie's signature of the Confession of Faith, and its grant to him of a certificate testifying to such signature, which certificate it was incumbent on him to present to the Senatus Academicus of Marischal College before the latter body could receive him into membership and instal him in the Humanity Chair. He presented himself at the meeting, signed the Confession, and then, before the clerk handed over his certificate, he rose and made the following declaration :—

I wish it to be distinctly understood, and I request that the clerk be ordered to put it on record, that I have signed the Confession of Faith, not as my private confession of faith, nor as a churchman learned in theology, but in my public professorial capacity, and in reference to University offices and duties merely. I am a warm friend of the Church of Scotland, and have been accustomed to worship according to the Presbyterian form, and will continue to

do so, but I am not sufficiently learned in theology to be able to decide on many articles of the Confession of Faith.

Mr Pirie, one of the members of Presbytery, said "that this declaration should have been made prior to signing, but that the Presbytery sitting there had nothing to do with any gentleman's mental reservations, and further, that such explanations could not be put on record."

John Blackie gave notice that if his explanation were not entered on the books of the Presbytery, it would appear in the public papers. The certificate was then completed and handed to him.

That evening he sent a copy of his declaration to the editors of the two leading newspapers in Aberdeen, and it appeared along with an account of the Presbytery proceedings in the 'Aberdeen Constitutional' on July 5th, while the 'Aberdeen Journal' contained a similar report in its issue of the same date. The editor of the former newspaper published, besides the declaration, the letter in which it was embodied, a step not contemplated by the writer, who had expressed the context somewhat rashly; and in a letter to the editor of the 'Aberdeen Journal,' written for publication and appearing in the issue of July 10, he desired that the

phrases in question should be held "*pro non scripta*," but he maintained: "I deem it beyond my power as a man of honour to alter or modify in any way the phraseology of the declaration I thought it my duty to make before the Presbytery."

The publication of these letters and of the test of his declaration roused a nest of clerical hornets, and it is interesting to note that the members of Presbytery who were most powerfully stirred to take action were mainly men of the Evangelical party, which fourteen years later was to effect the abolition of University Tests.

The Rev. Adam Corbett issued a circular to the members of Presbytery on July 13, convening a meeting for August 12, to consider John Blackie's letters in the Aberdeen papers. A full meeting assembled, which included Dr Forbes and Dr Forsyth. The obnoxious documents were produced and read. Mr James Edmond, Advocate, then appeared on behalf of representatives of most of the Aberdeen parishes, and presented a petition signed by a formidable array of elders, defenders of the Confession. This petition protested against the certificate granted to John Stuart Blackie, on the ground that he had not given the unqualified acknowledgment

and profession of the Confession of Faith which, the petitioners held, was required by law.

Mr Edmond, after presenting this petition, subjoined a paper which offered proofs of the allegations contained in the petition, and both documents were ordered to be authenticated by the moderator and clerk. These proofs were the letters and declaration by John Blackie printed in the Aberdeen newspapers. The Presbytery, after deliberation, decided to call a meeting for September 3, and to cite John Stuart Blackie to appear on that day to make satisfactory explanation, and in the meantime to forfeit his certificate until such explanation was made.

It had not occurred to the reverend body that the last decision was not within its legal power, and he, being better advised, retained his certificate. He went to Edinburgh and there consulted several legal friends, amongst whom Mr Robert Horn and Mr Barron—a hard-headed lawyer from Aberdeen—may be noted. He supplied them with full notes of the two meetings of Presbytery, and of his citation to appear before that convened for September 3. Both gentlemen sent him opinions on his position, and advised him to decline the jurisdiction of the Presbytery with regard to his certificate and appearance in person, but to meet their ruling to the extent

of sending a written explanation in the hands of an advocate, who should represent him on September 3.

Mr Alexander Anderson therefore received his instructions in the case, and laid on the table on that day a letter from his client, which had been written with serious deliberation, and expressed his position as fully as it was necessary to do,—and which the importance of this episode in John Blackie's life, not only to himself but to the release from bondage of the whole body of Scottish education, entitles to full quotation:—

EDINBURGH, 29th August 1839.

To the Reverend the Moderator  
of the Presbytery of Aberdeen.

REVEREND SIR,—I have to acknowledge receipt of an extract of the proceedings of the Presbytery of Aberdeen at their meeting of the 12th instant, and of a citation to appear before them on the 3d proximo, to answer the matters therein set forth. In availing myself of this opportunity afforded by the Presbytery of offering any explanation I may think fit in regard to the matters that were brought under the view of the Presbytery at the meeting above mentioned, I wish it to be understood that I do so without in any way admitting their legal right of interfering under the circumstances—a right which on various grounds I am advised does not exist. I am influenced in so doing only by the sincere respect and regard which I feel for the Church of Scotland, and the desire of acknowledging and meeting in a corresponding spirit the kindly disposition towards me evinced by the



Presbytery, when they invited explanations on my part as to the charge which has formed the subject of discussion. When I subscribed the Confession of Faith at the meeting of Presbytery on 2d July, I thought it due to the Presbytery as well as to myself to explain, *first*, that although a sincere friend of the Church of Scotland and accustomed to worship according to its form, yet being a layman and no theologian, I could not pretend to have so studied the Confession of Faith as to be able to decide on many of its articles; and, *second*, that I understood the confession of faith by a non-theological professor to be required of him by the law, not as his private confession of faith, but only in his public professional capacity, and in reference to University offices and duties. The Presbytery declined to put any such explanation on record, but they did not, after hearing the statement thus publicly made, think that it afforded any ground for refusing to grant the certificate of my having adhibited my subscription in terms of the Act of Parliament. The certificate was accordingly granted. I cannot perceive that anything has since occurred to alter the position in which the matter stood when the certificate was granted by the Presbytery. The proceedings before them were public, the discussion which had taken place was reported in one newspaper without any interference on my part, and nothing but the wish that what had been said should be fairly stated induced me to communicate to another newspaper what appeared to me a more correct report of the observations I had made. I am not aware that it is disputed that the communication addressed by me to the editor of the 'Constitutional' is in exact accordance with the explanation which I thought it right to offer to the Presbytery on the occasion of my subscription. Why therefore it should form a separate and substantial ground for

proceedings, which the Presbytery did not think it necessary to take in consequence of the declaration itself, I am at a loss to imagine. If the observations publicly made by me did not form a ground for refusing the certificate of subscription, a report of the proceedings addressed by me to one newspaper after a somewhat defective report had appeared in another, cannot alter the state of the case. Of course, I can take no account of any extraneous observations in reference to this matter made public by a misunderstanding, without my authority, and which, so soon as I was led to understand that they had been cause of offence to parties concerned, I promptly and publicly disowned. In regard to the import of the observations themselves, I trust that the Presbytery, viewing the matter with that candour which I anticipate at their hands, will consider the explanation I have now to offer as satisfactory.

In stating that "I had subscribed the Confession of Faith, not as my private confession of faith, nor as a churchman learned in theology, but in my public professional capacity, and in reference to University offices and duties merely," and that I was not "sufficiently learned in theology to be able to decide on many articles of the Confession of Faith," I adverted to a distinction that seemed to me well founded both in reason and in law. I conceive that in conscience I stand in a different situation in regard to the profession and subscription of the Confession of Faith from one appointed to a chair of theology, or an office in the Church, either of whom as a public expounder of Christian doctrine is to be understood by his subscription of the Confession of Faith as declaring that he has thoroughly studied it, and voluntarily comes forward to confess his ripe and deliberate assent to every matter therein set forth. But a non-theological professor

in a University stands in a different situation. He does not profess to be a scientific theologian, or to have studied and digested every part that may occur in such a comprehensive system as that embodied in the Confession of Faith. I cannot but be sensible that I am so circumstanced with regard to that Confession, and that it would be presumption in me to assert or believe that I had mastered every proposition which it contains so as to understand them in the precise sense in which they are understood by the Church. I hold, therefore, that the requisition of the law is sufficiently complied with by a professor holding a non-theological chair when he publicly subscribes the Confession of Faith as I have done, and gives the State thereby in behalf of the Church a guarantee, in the words of the Act of Assembly 1711, "That he shall teach in the chair to which he has been appointed nothing contrary to, or inconsistent with, the Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland, or to the doctrine, discipline, and government of the same."

I trust the explanations now made, which are offered with sincere respect for the Presbytery, and an anxious wish to bring that matter to an amicable issue, will be deemed satisfactory. I am most unwilling to raise questions of power and jurisdiction where I believe that a disposition to receive a reasonable explanation exists, and that such an explanation can be offered. Should it be otherwise, however, I cannot, consistently with the opinions I have received from my advisers, admit the right of the Presbytery either to recall or suspend the certificate they have already granted, or to exercise any such jurisdiction as is assumed in their present proceedings. Under the Statute of Queen Anne and previous Acts, I am advised, their powers in reference to the

subscription of the Confession of Faith are merely ministerial; that after subscription has been adhibited they are bound to grant certificate of that fact; and that at all events they have no power to recall a certificate already granted.

On these grounds, should it be necessary to urge them, I respectfully decline the jurisdiction of the Presbytery in the present proceedings. However unwilling I may be to engage in such a discussion (and no man can be more solicitous to avoid it), it would not become me, an humble individual, to admit a jurisdiction which I am advised is, to say the least of it, of doubtful existence, and which, if allowed, affects not me only, but the University at large, and indeed all the Universities of Scotland. As little, of course, can I expect that the reverend Presbytery should recede from their position; and if they be satisfied, as I trust they may, with the explanation I have now given, they will of course be understood to accept it without prejudice to the rights of the Church on the point of jurisdiction.—Holograph of me, JOHN STUART BLACKIE.

This letter was read to a full Presbytery, and was authenticated in due course. It was a direct blow, an attack on what may be termed the temporal power of the Church of Scotland. Something of *lèse-majesté* in its tone affronted the immediate dignity of the Presbytery of Aberdeen, and it is not surprising that a motion was introduced and seconded condemning the explanation offered as “unsatisfactory.” Dr Forbes of Old

Machar and Dr Forsyth sought to amend the motion by proposing to refer the whole matter to the next meeting of Synod, but they were not supported, and the Presbytery carried, against their dissent, the final motion that "Mr John Stuart Blackie has not signed the Confession of Faith as the confession of his faith in conformity with the terms of the Act of Parliament; and further, that he does not consider himself bound by the formula signed by him on the 2d day of July last."

The reverend body sent copies of this finding to the Principal and Secretary of the Senatus Academicus, a timid corporation, which might at this juncture have stepped into the breach and inscribed the champion of academical liberty upon its roll-call, but which preferred "not to proceed to fix a day for the admission of Mr Blackie while the obstacle or objection created by the Presbytery's finding remains." The Professors of Marischal College were, as a matter of fact, supporters of Dr Melvin, who had given the extra lectures on Latin since 1836, and they were not unhopful that, should the Presbytery succeed in quashing Mr Blackie's appointment, their candidate might take his place.

Their attitude decided the next step for the

Professor-elect. The Queen's Commission was in his hands, so was the Aberdeen Presbytery's certificate that he had signed the Confession of Faith. He raised an action of declarator against the Senatus Academicus of the Aberdeen University. Its members shirked the contest, and put forward the Presbytery as the real party in defence. That body lodged a minute craving to be sisted as defenders, and engaged Mr Neaves to plead their cause. Mr Robert Hunter represented John Blackie, and the case came before Lord Cunninghame. It was decided in favour of the pursuer on the ground "that the Presbytery had no *title* to appear—their duty in the matter of witnessing a subscription being *ministerial* only." His Lordship held that Professor Blackie's error "lay in his thinking it necessary to state in any form that which all mankind would have implied." The Presbytery wished to appeal to the Inner House, but the case was refused, and they had to be contented with paying only their own costs, while the Professor discharged those with which the proceedings had saddled him. These were beyond his own means, but Miss Manie Stodart came to the rescue and lent him the money needed.

This case was one of much greater importance

than at first appeared. The University Test Acts, how necessary soever they were, when they were first made binding, for the preservation of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, and for the exclusion of the leaven of Episcopacy from the national schools and universities, had fulfilled their purpose, and cumbered now the growth which once they guarded. They were a stumbling-block to the thoughtful, a formula accepted with closed eyes by the worldly-wise. The men who most obstinately opposed John Stuart Blackie's election, incapable of appreciating his deep-seated piety, which was of the spirit and therefore living, submitting to no trammels of the letter, were honest enough according to their lights, which imposed a political document upon the conscience, and made its clauses more binding than the eternal laws of God. Their zeal was undeniable,—they were the men who, four years later, sacrificed manse and stipend for conscience' sake, and, with the superb inconsistency of enthusiasts, left the very Church whose connection with the State and whose hold upon education they had so strenuously upheld. The Disruption took place in 1843, and ten years later the men who made the Disruption, finding themselves excluded from the chief places in Scottish Univer-

sities, effected an abolition of University Tests, which confined subscription of the Confession of Faith to Professors of Divinity,—a remnant of the ancient order which has recently been swept away.

Two years elapsed between the meeting of Presbytery on July 2, 1839, and the failure of the same body to establish by law their finding against Professor Blackie. He spent these years in Edinburgh, taking up his old quarters in Dublin Street. He was occupied as before in writing for the Reviews and Magazines, in the study of Greek, and particularly of the dramas of Æschylus and of Euripides, and in the study of German Literature.

In the 'Foreign Quarterly Review' for January 1840 he published a paper on the 'Memoirs of Rahel,' and in July one upon 'Euripides,' while in the same year he wrote for 'Blackwood's Magazine' no fewer than three articles,—one in July upon Weber's 'Germany,' one in October upon the "Austrians," and one in December called "Reminiscences of 1813 in Germany." To 'Tait's Magazine' he contributed in the same year a series of articles on "Student Life in Germany," giving some of the student songs with their melodies. Other articles were on



the "Rights of the Christian People" and on "Apostolical Succession"; while he supplied the Poet's Corner in the same Magazine with "My Loves," "Night," and the "Wail of an Idol."

Of all this work, the Burschen songs, translated into spirited English, naturally became most popular. A friend wrote from St Lucia :—

What a pity you are not here to sing your own German translations, which have found their way out here! The Chief-Justice [Reddie, an old Göttingen Bursch] was most anxious to know who had done the "Landesvater" into English, as well as the other ballads. I, of course, told him; not forgetting the summons of declarator, and all about the subscription of articles. The Justice sends his best acknowledgments to you, and begs you may persevere, and succeed alike in your versions and in your declarator.

Dr Kirchner, the translator of 'Self-Culture' into German, acknowledged in generous terms, in an obituary notice of Professor Blackie, the valuable work done in those years of stress and struggle on behalf of German literature, and ranked him with Thomas Carlyle in this field of labour.

His friend Mr Anderson of Banchory was also much pleased with the Burschen songs, and somewhat surprised at his taking up historical

subjects. He wrote a pregnant word of advice on this :—

It is extremely useless to launch on such an ocean without a well-defined course and port of arrival. It will not do to hunt all and sundry game that may start up in this immense forest. Read always with a pen in your hand, an eye for opposite sides—with a deep slow pulse of thought, and a clear steady notion of your own standpoint or whereabouts.

And in reference to the declarator :—

I trust that as interdicts are in fashion, at least against clergymen, you will not fail to get one more, or whatever else may be necessary for your installation in a very pretty building about seventeen miles from the manse of Banchory.

Amongst his private interests was the correspondence which he maintained with Miss Eliza Wyld. The ardour with which this had been inaugurated had mellowed into tranquil friendship. He supplied his cousin with books, and drew from her the vivid criticisms which her rapid discernment suggested. He was much interested in her views of all the questions which occupied his own mind, and in one letter of 1840 alluded to his debt to her in "ideas." This letter speaks of an illness from which she was suffering.

I shall be glad [he says] to hear that you have recovered your wonted health and—spirits I need not add, for I am told you amused yourself making faces at the doctor all the time the grave fool was bleeding you for a complaint he did not understand.

But the high spirits were perhaps due to a touch of fever, for the deeper mind of Eliza Wyld was hostile to such freaks, and a slight delicacy of constitution had imparted to it a tendency to melancholy, strangely consorted with her swift movements and responsiveness to jest and humour. She already desired as her ideal temperament “contentment,” to which John Blackie characteristically replied :—

The law of the universe is *Perfectionation*—that is to say, progression from bad to good, from good to better, and from better to best. And this progression is effected by *activity*. We make the Sabbath the first day of the week—very foolish! It is and was the last day of the week, and is a symbol of enjoyment in work done during the six days that precede, work being the very perfect business and definition of life.

There was no doubt in his own mind about his duty. He set to work, without a murmur against Presbytery or University, biding his time in respect of both, and flinging himself with spirit, proof against “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” into the tasks that lay to hand.

A glimpse of his exuberance in costume at this time is given in some doggerel lines by Mr Robert Horn, from which we may borrow a descriptive couplet :—

“ He'll flourish bludgeons and wear tartan breeks,  
A monstrous stock, and long hair o'er the cheeks.”

No doubt the Professor-elect startled the staid proprieties of Moray Place in garb which verged on the casual and not on the modish.

## CHAPTER IX.

## INSTALLATION AND MARRIAGE.

1841-1842.

THE early part of the year 1841 was productive of some well-written papers. The 'Foreign Quarterly Review' for January contained an account of the 'Memoirs of Varnhagen von Ense,' and its April number introduced Ludwig Uhland and his followers, grouped as "Suabian Poets," to the reading public.

'Blackwood's Magazine' for February contained a review of the 'Memoirs of Baron Strombeck,' whose account of King Jerome Buonaparte's dramatic appearance in Westphalia, as its satrap for Napoleon, was full of interest for the world of fifty years ago. In August, John Blackie also contributed to 'Maga' a notable article on the "Traits and Tendencies of German Literature,"

enlarging with point on the influence of the State upon the national mind.

For 'Tait's Magazine' he continued the popular "Burschen Melodies," and wrote an article on "Protestantism, Puseyism, and Catholicism," contributing to the Poet's Corner "The Emigrant's Song," "To a Caged Eagle," and "My Lady's Picture."

The routine of this year's spring was varied by an episode, sudden, tumultuous, and fleeting, which can scarcely be ignored. He fell violently in love with a lady whose identity the fragmentary indications of flashing eyes and imperious temper, with the solitary information that her name was Mary, cannot help us to discover. He met her once without speaking to her, a second time with five minutes' ordinary talk, and after, dreamt of her for two months together. Then came a fortunate Wednesday evening, when he was permitted to escort her home from a party, and when she graciously gave him leave to call. This he was prompt to do, and his passion growing peremptory, he rashly proposed and was refused. In the deep dejection which followed he asked advice from his cousin Eliza Wyld. She gave him the best counsel that a girl could give, veiling her surprise in sympathetic interest. She pointed out to him that so sudden an offer

would startle and repel any woman whose affection was worth winning, and that he must give her time to become accustomed to his wooing. John was grateful for this advice, and adventured further addresses with more deliberation, finding in Mary's mother a friendly advocate of his suit. But late in July, when his Chair was won, and when his proposal was backed with professorial dignity, he returned to the charge in vain. Mary cared not for him, and for a day he was steeped in misery. Then he called at the house in Royal Terrace, where the Wylds were living, and found Eliza in the drawing-room arranging flowers. Her quick glance fathomed his condition, and she sat down beside him to listen to his story. Her sympathy for his disappointment was very genuine, although she was woman enough at once to resent Mary's coquetry, and to be glad that she had failed to recognise the worth of what she had refused. She said, "I feel so much for you, I feel all your sorrow." John Blackie rose, took her hand, kissed it, and went away. But the memory of that consoling kiss pursued him. He went away healed of his grievous hurt. The soft hand of his gentle cousin had salved the wound and wiped away its remembrance. The infatuation, which had absorbed him for four months, lifted and left him free, with "a new song in his mouth."

There can be no doubt that the upwelling of her heart in such full-flowing sympathy, neither stinted by petty reserves nor discoloured by resentment, filled his mind with the vision of her great womanliness, strong to purify and to heal. He left suddenly because the revulsion overwhelmed him ; but the enchantress was cast out, and in her place was throned the image of the noble woman whom he set himself to win for his wife. He had made up his mind upon what grounds a man should marry. In a letter of this year, the subject being urgent, he wrote :—

A pair of wise hands to keep your house in order? no doubt; but I despise a man who will marry a woman merely or mainly to keep his house. I have made up my mind to marry for love and spiritual sympathy, or not at all.

The month of July came to a close with this episode. The squares and terraces of Edinburgh were emptying fast, and Mr and Mrs Wyld were on the eve of their departure for Gilston. John sent his cousin a gift of Wordsworth's Poems in six beautiful volumes. She was not to share the family removal, but had accepted an invitation to spend the month of August at Innerleithen with relatives who had both insight and sympathy. John Blackie was one of their favourites, and when he came to the manse at Innerleithen on



an improvised visit to the minister there,—an old comrade, on whose hospitality he could rely,—they made him welcome to join the family diversions. But a great awe fell upon him as he drew into closer companionship with Eliza Wyld. How could he hope that this stately creature, from whom his allegiance had swerved for a space, and who had withdrawn into the bastioned reserve where women guard their hearts, should condescend to him? In the humility of a great and reverent love he sought a woman's counsel. She bade him hope, and promised him an opportunity. One evening when he called he found Eliza at home alone, beguiling her solitude with a song,—for a melodious voice was one of her many gifts,—and without hazarding a commonplace greeting, which might dull the edge of his daring, he entreated her at once to be his wife.

Next day John Blackie wrote to Mr Wyld to ask him for his daughter, and the letter produced consternation at Gilston. The gift was curtly denied, and Eliza was bidden return to her family. She found father, mother, and brothers in arms against her engagement, and all September she bore much upbraiding. But she had given her heart and her promise both, and it did not occur to her that it was possible to recall her gifts. Her lover wrote to her constantly, and in a

sonnet celebrated the meteoric light which he had mistaken for love's dawn, whose day was all the time broadening into beauty.

There are two loves, fiery the one and fierce,  
And as stray stars that scare the sleepy night  
Sudden and strange, God-sent to cleave and pierce  
The inmost marrow with resistless might ;  
The other gentle, as on springy steep  
The well that grows to a brook and to a river,  
And mellow as rich autumn lights that sweep  
The green empurpled hills. From eager quiver  
Cupid with that first smote to wound—with this  
To heal me (blessèd in both wound and healing !),  
That I, his bard, might know by sure revealing  
The twin Avatars of his bane and bliss :  
Fierce flame from Mary's keen electric eye,  
And calm warm sun from Eliza's tempered sky.

Eliza wrote to him from Gilston to describe the disapprobation of her engagement which prevailed there, and he cheered her constancy with hopeful letters.

The storm blows loudest when it is nearest the calm.  
Do not vex yourself, my sweetest,—

The world is wide—hope is a gallant rider,  
God is a good provider.

He was in Edinburgh for three weeks of September, busy with his introductory lecture. “I must quarry out and build up,” he wrote, “something like a decent Christian architecture of these harsh and heathenish Romans, whom I hate.”

It was not altogether wonderful that Mr Wyld should have misgivings about the engagement. John Blackie had chiefly impressed the outer circle of his cousinhood with his volatility and want of the virtues most held in esteem by respectability. He had changed his mind so often with regard to a profession ; he made a precarious living by the pen, which the well-to-do deemed then a paltry trade ; he dressed badly ; his manners were abrupt—they called them “harum-scarum, the Blackie manners” ; they did not believe that he would hold his professorship for six months—they gave him just that time “to go to the devil.” One member of the family called on him at Dublin Street to expostulate about his manners. We may almost suppose that they were at the bottom of the family opposition.

He was affronted at the expostulation, and showed some prick of pride ; but he wrote to Eliza :—

If there be anything about my manner that offends you, or is calculated to offend other people, preach me a sermon on that text, and I will listen to you and obey you like a child. You have the privilege to preach to me now and always.

This well-placed love, meeting with such generous response, quickened his deep-seated piety. He wrote on September 4 :—

I love and reverence everything that Jesus taught, and I know by experience that there is no satisfying bliss for the soul except in the regeneration of the heart and the renovation of the life *through all its daily details*, by the doctrine of love which Christ preached; and if you can find anything in me which you can like, anything that you can esteem, believe me, I have that mainly from an ancient intimate acquaintance with, and practical close-clinging to, the heart-reaching precepts of the Gospel.

Eliza Wyld was a new revelation of that Gospel to him, and how gladly he read it!

God preaches His living Gospel in the heart and life of a glowing, open, truthful woman. Eyes, open eyes, and always opening wider, and the heart beneath calm, yet eager. There is a blessing with you, Eliza, because you are true-hearted, and because you can see.

John Blackie in a manly letter refused to accept his dismissal at Mr Wyld's hands, and intimated that only the daughter and not the father could break the bond which united them, and that his trust in her steadfastness forbade him to fear such a rupture. The efforts of the family were therefore directed to make Eliza give him up. She was forbidden to write to him and to receive his letters. For a time she could only send him an occasional line, saddened by the displeasure which surrounded her. But he wrote to her every few days brave and tender letters, which her father handed to her often without question,

—for although he was hostile to the engagement, Mr Wyld did not stoop to the meaner forms of interference.

John Blackie left Edinburgh for Aberdeen about the 20th of September, and stayed for a time with his father, who had removed to a larger house in King Street. Mr Wyld sent him no answer, but the young Professor refused to be snubbed. At last he received a demand from Mrs Wyld for the letters which Eliza had already written to him. He declined to return them, and wrote to the daughter comforting and reassuring her with full measure of his affection. Her patience under the strain at home was at length exhausted, and one morning late in October she rose very early, before any one else was up, dressed herself, and left the house with four shillings and sixpence in her purse. She walked to Leven, and on the road she met the workers on the farm at Gilston going to her father's fields. They stared to see their master's daughter abroad and on foot at such an hour, and she was afraid that they might go to the house and tell the servants; but she got safely to Leven in time for the early boat to Leith, where she took a cab and drove to a relative's house in Edinburgh. The kind friends, although amazed at her appearance, welcomed her to their home, and she stayed there till February. She re-

fused to go back so long as her correspondence with John Blackie was forbidden, and she bade her parents understand that she considered herself irrevocably pledged to be his wife. She sent him a watch-guard made of her hair, and the gift relieved him from all fear of her giving way. He began his work in happy mood.

His installation took place on November 1, and was graced by the presence of the Provost and Magistrates of Aberdeen in their robes of office, while he himself wore a lustrous gown, befrogged and ample, which cost but three guineas. He confronted his first academical audience successfully, and the lecture which began his forty years' professoriate made no little stir. In it he gave warning that he meant by Latin no mere routine of conjugations and declensions, but the "living vesture" of the thought and action of historical generations.

The question [he wrote afterwards] whether the conjunction *ut* in certain cases should be followed by the imperfect or the perfect subjunctive, seemed to me not of the slightest significance in reference to the main end of classical education. *What I wanted was, through Latin, to awaken wide human sympathies, and to enlarge the field of vision.*

The lecture was reported in the Aberdeen newspapers according to the varying taste of their

editors, the one giving an excellent abstract of the matter, the others creaming off its exuberances for the entertainment of their readers. Exuberances there certainly were, and a far too exalted estimate of the intelligence of his class; for his mind, matured by foreign schools of education, soared above the standard at home. But the lecture drew commendation from the more scholarly Aberdonians, and seated him with distinction in his Chair.

Miss Manie Stodart had in the meantime chosen and furnished for him a small house in Dee Street, New Aberdeen, and he removed his books and luggage thither during the first week of November. On the 7th he wrote the first letter to his promised wife from the home to which he was to bring her in the following April.

It is a lovely day [he wrote]; the bright sun is shining on the broad blue sea that bounds the horizon before the window of my snug little study here: the many-coloured pennons and flags of the ships are sporting in the breeze.

His sister Christina came to stay with him, and the learned pair conversed in Latin at their meals, which were solemnised by a Latin benediction. He went on Sundays "to sit once a-day in the loft of the College Church like a sober, staid, proper Professor." He was making plans already for their wedding trip,—wished to take

his wife to Germany, to Italy, but feared that many immediate expenses would blight such hopes. "We must content ourselves with lodgings at Banchory-Ternan, a bonnie, bonnie place, —or elsewhere on Deeside, I fear."

Their prospects were of pinched housekeeping and small economies. The Professor refused to believe that Mr Wyld would persist in his displeasure, but counted on no dowry and made light of all allusion to her inheritance.

You shall soon [he wrote to her] see your father, dearest, sitting as comfortably at my fireside as he does at his own. I believe that the only invincible power in the world is love; I shall ply your father with that and that only, and if I do not conquer—Christianity never conquered.

The *Senatus Academicus* proved hard to deal with. The new Chair of Humanity received from endowment £200 a-year, but the fees, which should have amounted to three guineas for each student during the session, were cut down to less than one-half of that sum, and Professor Blackie was asked to accept the pittance which the University had paid to Dr Melvin—one guinea for each member of the first class and half-a-guinea for each of the second class. It was a preposterous demand, and no doubt was intended to indicate that the Chair of Humanity did not occupy the same exalted academical position as



those which had already made Marischal College renowned for its pedantry. The young Professor made honourable resistance, and the fees were raised to a guinea and a half for the bajans and fifteen shillings for the semis. For the modest endowment and these fees he was expected to give nine lectures weekly, and he grumbled, not at the disproportion between the fees and the work, but at the limited number of hours allotted to him, and at the attempt to degrade the Chair of Humanity to a subsidiary place in the scale of importance. For through the Chair of Humanity he set himself to reform the whole system of Scottish University teaching, and he needed to marshal on his side every aid, real and apparent, which could secure to him the attention both of practical and political educationists. His work in this direction, which had begun in Göttingen, when he wrote his first appeal to the Scottish public, was stimulated by the state of education in Aberdeen, petrified and sterile, and it took from this time a concentrated force from the pressure of daily experience which was to make it the influential factor in later though still incomplete reforms. But this subject is too emphatically connected with Professor Blackie to be touched lightly in a chapter which deals with its inception merely.

He had worked for four weeks, making ex-

periences, afterwards to be noted, when the wind began to veer with regard to his engagement. A faint favouring breeze arose ; several members of the Wyld family criticised unfavourably the attitude at Gilston, and spoke on behalf of the Professor, openly taking his part. Events were conspiring for him. It could no longer be gainsaid that he held the Chair of Humanity in Aberdeen and filled it with honour. Mr Wyld's heart was softening towards his daughter, whose presence he missed, and whose strength of purpose he began to realise. Friends on all sides upheld her conduct, and censured the opposition to so fitting a marriage. It was evident that no unreasonable wrath would frighten Eliza Wyld into a cowardly renunciation. She meant to stand by the man who loved her, whose intellect and aspiring career she esteemed far above the comforts of Gilston.

Had it been possible, John Blackie would have come to marry her in Edinburgh ; but his salary was not to fall due till January, and the fees were in arrears, many of the students not paying till the session was near its close. Not till April could the little house be fully arrayed to greet his bride, and he had settled to marry her in that month,—in Edinburgh, if there was no relenting ; at her home, if Mr Wyld permitted.

In the meantime he was occupied with making every kind of experiment in teaching which should rouse the interest of his "boys." He was translating Horace's Odes into blank verse—a version which he never published, but the interest of which animated his work at the College. "Man is a singing animal," he said, and to rouse up every available faculty in his class he took to poring, till long past midnight, over "unintelligible erudition about old Greek music." To revive the classic union of verse with melody, he spent hours in wedding Horace's Odes to musical measure, and in Spohr's 'Faust' and "Maggie Lauder" found airs that consorted with their rhythm. Appealing to both ear and eye, he covered the class-room walls with diagrams, drawn by himself. He wrote: "I seek to put modern blood and life into these dry old formulas." The task was hard, and many of those dull young Aberdonians must have remained stony ground, in spite of all his vigorous delving and harrowing; but a few gave way, and he recorded:—

I have some half-a-dozen very fine lads, with whom, I think, I have succeeded in setting their souls astir. We have eight of them to breakfast every Saturday morning.

It was no easy matter to keep order in a class

of boys fresh from the grammar-school, where they had submitted to the harsh discipline of the tawse, and were too rough and unmannerly to understand the kindly humour of the new Professor. He began by taking them for students and treating them as intelligently anxious to work, and was sore put to it to reduce the noisy crew to submission when, mistaking his gentleness for weakness, they asserted their natural savagery in daily disturbances. He had recourse to his only defensive weapon, fines sternly imposed, and so kept moderate whip-hold of the team. Dr Forbes White tells us in 'Alma Mater':—

By his good nature and by his cutting wit he soon mastered the turbulent element, and by my year '43-'44, an easy, natural good behaviour was the rule. He was loved, and this love got him respect. He was of course fond of jokes and of extreme statements which caused a laugh, but the class went on sweetly and merrily, busily at work, perfectly under control,—a class entirely different from any other in the ease of its manner.

He found his rooms in Dee Street very small; they cramped the march to which he beat his thoughts into language. His maid-servant, too, neglected her duties; he needed a wise manager at home.

The Professors were bending from their first

formality, and called upon him. They were not interesting, and it is to be feared that he did not sun himself in their condescension. He excepted Professor Lizars from the "catalogue of nobodies," and Mr Brown, the Professor of Greek, who was "jovial and liked a joke, and was by no means at fault in his particular line."

He managed to visit Edinburgh for three days of the Christmas week, and spent them with his friends, seeing much of his promised wife, and growing more aware of her delight in all things lovely and of good report. He found her brave and cheerful, speaking tenderly of her father, but resolved to abide by her lover. He wrote to her after his return more frequently, and if possible more devotedly, than ever. She was reading Wordsworth and Coleridge with full sympathy, and her pleasure in their poetry drew from him a characteristic acknowledgment:—

Poetry is my religion, my all. I love the Gospel of the blessed Jesus, because it is instinct in every line with the poetry of emotion and of conduct. It is the beautiful, the devoted in conduct, to which I cling.

It was on the 25th of January 1842 that he gave his first public and popular lecture. The movement for popular lectures had just begun, and John Blackie threw himself into it with vigour, the first Professor in Scotland who did

so. His audience was large, and the subject—"The Principles of Poetry and the Fine Arts"—had the advantage of being new to the Aberdonians. He wrote to Eliza Wyld on the following day :—

My lecture last night, so far as I could read its reception myself, and was informed by others, was a decided hit. There's for you! Platonism preached to the hard granite ears of Aberdeen, and with applause! I am a little proud of the achievement. And such an audience, overflowing! Three cheers for the little Professor! Hurrah! The ladies are now most mathematically convinced that the difference between the estimation in which they are held here, and that which is enjoyed by the Hottentot Venus, depends not on association and capricious taste, but on eternal, immutable, and divine laws.

In this lecture he sounded a *Leitmotif*, on which he dwelt with varying emphasis all his life. Indeed by this time he had chosen and proclaimed the texts on which utterance was given to him, and what other texts were left for later years were but contexts or revised readings of those.

He read this lecture, but was sensible of the "bondage of the paper," and it set him thinking upon the whole subject of public oratory.

I have been set upon a new scent this week [he wrote], and my ambition has got a new push. It was the lecture,

I think, that did it. I will not be satisfied now till I become a great public speaker. I have gone to Calvert, our elocutionist, and am studying the art of speaking and reading, and mean to educate myself regularly for a lecturer. The field of good here open for me is immense: I see no bound to it. My intention is to free myself altogether from the bondage of the paper, and get to preach real poetry and eloquence. A bold cast for an erect soul, looking not down upon slavish paper! This is the problem that possesses and vexes me now. Let me bellow my pedagogic thunders grandly!

Busy with his translation of the Odes of Horace, with his diagrams, views of Rome, and historical lectures, with the varied devices by which he sought to rouse minds dulled by grammar and the tawse, he won some return at last, and in the end of January was able to write:—

My boys in the first class, who began with 50, now read 120 lines in an hour quite fluently; that's something! Progress!

Special studies filled the hours at leisure from his classes, and these seemed to have been more particularly the translation of 'Æschylus' into English verse, a review of poetical measures, and an investigation into the whole question of Scottish education.

The first session came to a close at the end of March, and his marriage was fixed for April 19.

In February Mr Wyld came to Drummond Place and took his daughter home. The family had returned to 32 Royal Terrace. They had now consented to the inevitable, and Mr Wyld, from the moment of his surrender, treated Eliza with the utmost tenderness. He gave her a handsome sum of money for her preparations, which were now in full swing.

The Professor left Aberdeen on April 4, bent on walking off the oppression accumulated by seven months of constant work. He carried out his plan, and walked by Banchory and Braemar to Coupar-Angus, where he took coach to Edinburgh. The journey thus prolonged took about a week, but refreshed him thoroughly. From the manse of Banchory, where he rested the first night, he sent his bride a lyric :—

Wherefore now, nor song nor sonnet  
Write I thee, Eliza dear?  
Love's a plant—the blossom on it  
*Rhyme*, child of the vernal year.  
With the full-grown time it ceases,  
Waning as the fruit increases:  
Therefore now, nor song nor sonnet  
Write I thee, Eliza dear.

Ever, as I would be chiming  
Pretty, pointed lines to thee,  
Seems a power to check my rhyming,  
And it reasons thus with me:



"Fool, why wilt thou still be prating?  
Truth that's known needs no debating!"  
Therefore I nor song nor sonnet  
Write, Eliza dear, to thee!

It was the fashion in those days to celebrate Edinburgh weddings in the evening, and at seven o'clock on April 19, Mr Glover united John Stuart Blackie and Eliza Wyld in the bonds of holy matrimony. A large party was assembled to honour the occasion, and amongst them were the bridegroom's friends, Mr Theodore Martin, Sir William Hamilton, Lord Cunningham, Mr Robert Horn, and Dr John Brown. The minister of Banchory was not able to be present, but Mr Andrew Jamieson filled the post of "best man," and the bride was attended by three bride-maidens, her special friends. After the rites, the two made man and wife left the company and drove to Midcalder, about eleven miles from Edinburgh. There had been much cogitation about the "jaunt," which had to be accomplished in ten days; for on the last day of April they were due in Aberdeen, in time for certain summer labours which began with May. So a few days at Midcalder and at Peebles fulfilled the term of their honeymoon, but they were days of peace after struggle. Joy quickened the beat of John Blackie's poetic pulse, and we owe to

these days at Peebles two of his best and best-known poems. One is the "Benedicite," beginning—

Angels holy,  
High and lowly,  
Sing the praises of the Lord !  
Earth and sky, all living nature,  
Man, the stamp of thy Creator,  
Praise ye, praise ye, God the Lord !

This beautiful hymn has been since included in many Hymnals, and notably in that of the Jewish Church. It was metrically arranged to be sung to the German air of "Alles Schweige."

The other song is even better known. Walking one day along the river-path which skirts the Tweed between the bridge and Neidpath Castle, he gave utterance to a natural expression of strong Scottish feeling in the song of "Jenny Geddes"—"the valiant Jenny Geddes, that flung the three-legged stool." At this time he had not studied the Hundred Years' War of the Scottish Church, nor was he acquainted with more than its popular history. The incidents in high relief upon that gallant record were, however, in strong accord with his enthusiasm for the "poetry of conduct," and the courage, combativeness, self-assertion, and heroism which marked the Scottish resistance, found each an echo in his character. The song took shape accordingly, and when his

instinctive impressions were confirmed by a full acquaintance with the history of the period, it lay ready to hand as a rally to the flag of the Scottish Church, when in after-days the tide of southern fashion, setting northwards with Episcopalianism on its crest, rippled into every nook and corner of his country.

Professor and Mrs Blackie went by coach to Aberdeen at the end of April, and set agoing their home-life in the little house in Dee Street. Here they found awaiting them a delightful letter from Baron Bunsen, wishing them "Heil! Heil! Heil!"

The Professor began his summer class at once, and this too was the earnest of a movement which it took thirty years to make practical throughout both England and Scotland, and fifty years to guide to its natural and logical issue. In his class-room in Marischal College assembled about a dozen ladies—amongst them his young wife—on the morning of May 1, to receive lessons in the German language. It was a new thing for the ladies of Aberdeen to receive instruction from a Professor, and the lessons went on briskly till the end of June.

Early in July the Professor and his wife abandoned work for rest, and went to Banchory-Ternan, where they spent three months in a cottage shared

by his father and mother. They had hoped to go farther afield, but their finances were under heavy embargo for the first few years. There were expenses for furniture, for books ; there was interest to be paid to Aunt Manie for some hundreds of pounds ; the young wife had condemned her husband's casually assorted wardrobe, and had insisted upon its reconstitution : her talent for domestic economy, notable and helpful as it was to prove, needed a starting-point of indispensable expenditure. Besides, the Professor's objection to the cramped limits of the house in Dee Street was waxing imperious. She was aware of an imminent flitting, and it had to be reckoned with in her balance-sheet. So the summer months passed quietly in the little village of Banchory-Ternan, and the companionship of Mr Anderson made them memorable.

## CHAPTER X.

## ABERDEEN AND UNIVERSITY REFORM.

1842-1850.

DURING the first year of his work in Aberdeen, Professor Blackie's public and private engagements interrupted the flow of his contributions to magazine literature. But after marriage he returned to this field of labour, and during his leisure hours in the following winter he prepared a review of Klopstock's collected works, which appeared in the 'Foreign Quarterly Review' for January 1843; and an article on Professor Steffens's personal memoirs of the German movement against Napoleon, for the April number of the same Review.

Before the session began he made a second effort to secure his full professorial fees, and gained a partial victory over the grudging

Senate. He secured a fee of two guineas from each student of the second class for three hours' teaching. This raised his full salary to about £350, a sum which—when mulcted of the interest due to Miss Stodart, of the payments expected from Scotch Professors to public and ceremonious demands, of the money spent on essential books—left a mere sufficiency for current needs and private charities. But Mrs Blackie brought to the management of this small income a singular gift for wise economy; and wholesome food, books, and warmth were always forthcoming, although these excluded every amenity of home embellishment for some years. It was a trial to her fine taste to endure the horse-hair chairs and sofas which meagrely furnished their little parlours; but her hand had the magic touch which gives grace, and these stiff essentials, anew distributed, grew pliant and comfortable at her desire. She sped from room to room, pouncing upon disorder and making home fair and friendly to the eye, with such swift movement and sure hand, that her husband called her "Oke," the swift one, and the name clung to her always.

When the session was over, they moved from Dee Street in New Aberdeen to High Street, close to the Town-hall of Old Aberdeen. Here, for £30 a-year, they got a charming house, one of its sit-

ting-rooms thirty feet long, in which the Professor could march from end to end, while he rolled out the lines of strophe and antistrophe from "Agamemnon" or "The Eumenides." They were here in closer social touch with their circle of friends who lived in Old Aberdeen. The courtesies of the academical world were solemn, and they were relieved to live amongst friendly folks, whose incomes were small like their own, and whose kindness adorned their hospitalities. The Gerards, Principal and Mrs Jack, Dr and Mrs Forbes, the Buchans, Professor and Mrs Gregory, and many maiden ladies old and young, who lived in pleasant little homes, and suggested to the Professor the title of *Parthenopolis* for Old Aberdeen, welcomed him and Mrs Blackie to their quarter. They were both great favourites in the City of Spinsters, where there were many tea-drinkings and junketings, cheery and informal.

But in spite of this change for the better, a fit of the old dejection seems to have lured John Blackie into its depths about the very time that the flitting was accomplished. Perhaps he was overworked, and the strain of his gallant fight against prejudice and stupidity was beginning to tell. Unhappily, too, some book of Unitarian sermons had drifted into the current of his life, and he had thought fit to read them. They set

in motion that flickering pulse of unbelief which beats intermittently in every serious mind. He began to waste his strength once more in vain questionings, letting his faith ebb. More was due to physical exhaustion than to mental change. He was worn out with the duties of the session, which he supplemented with such strenuous undertakings at home. Besides, the government of his class was always a serious difficulty. It was most distasteful to him to pose as a stern taskmaster, and by fines and impositions to secure respect from youths whom he would gladly have greeted as fellow-students, and the disorder, over which the pedagogue and not the man prevailed, discouraged him daily. As he never bent to the storm, it was not wonderful that the spring should have found him worn out. Besides, he was subject to a recurrent ailment at that season which must of itself have reduced his strength.

There is no doubt that he reviewed his position under the influence of these conditions, and fell into sore distress. It seemed to him that he must give up the Humanity Chair, become perilous to one at variance not only with the Calvinism which overshadowed it, but with the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. He wrote to Mr Anderson of Banchory for advice, and in the meantime was withdrawn into silence and depression. His wife sought in vain to comfort



him. The problem, which he believed to be mental,—but which was no more than a mood, transient as the physical weakness which induced it,—was not to be solved by wifely solicitude. Early in May Mr Anderson's letter arrived.

To me it appears [he wrote] that you look at Calvinism entirely on the side of its "eternal decrees." Now I think you cannot get rid of these doctrines even as a Rationalist; at least I never could. They are universals which enter into every system; and I do most seriously assure you, after some consideration and practical acquaintance with their tenets, that Unitarianism, objectively, is far more untenable, and, subjectively, far more heartless and cold. I know not a more forced and unnatural system, when considered as connected with a belief in a supernatural revelation. That you should be inclined to universalism I do not wonder; and that you should be yet without belief in a positive revelation in Christianity, knowing your natural tendency and historical development, though I regret, I can admit; but that you will long be captivated with the quagmires and bogs of Unitarianism *I do not believe*. Consider, my dear sir, you have but heard one of their ministers, and have not seen the cold-hearted piety their religion begets. Think also that the irksomeness you feel at not being free to express all your opinions, though quite free to think and form them, is a part of the discipline of Providence. Reflect also that your spiritual life and faculties are but in progress of development, and sure I am, if you will wait twelve months, the objective will be seen differently, the subjective being different. I highly respect your feelings, and deeply sympathise with you. These oaths and tests are

abominable things, and the history of them, when written, will reveal a tissue of iniquitous cruelties. Tholuck said to me once that "when the man became a perfect Christian he outgrew ordinances." I thought of Milton. But, for example and for sympathy, attendance on public worship is a duty to many to whom it would not be otherwise.

This wise friend presented the difficulty in a new light, as one to be solved by no miraculous interposition, far less by rash action, but by patient waiting for the truth to which the honest mind attains in time. John Blackie cast off once and for ever the gloom which had beset him. He unfurled the flag under which his lifelong work was done, the flag which bore this scroll, "Trust in the Lord, and be thou doing good." By the month of July he was able to say: "What I want are three things—1st, a great cause; 2d, a great battle; 3d, a great victory."

During the months of June, July, and August, Mrs Blackie was in Edinburgh and at Gilston. Her health had given way; the cold spring had brought bronchitis and a touch of pneumonia with it, due as much to economy of household comfort as to the weather. Her husband found her much better, when he joined her in August, after a strenuous summer session occupied with German classes and reviews for the magazines.

Debts pressed sorely upon him, and he cleared off a fair proportion by this work.

Incidents of the next few years are hard to disentangle from his correspondence, which is occupied more with the subjects engrossing his mind than with details which can be chronicled. But that correspondence was with men known and still remembered. Thus Mr R. H. Horne, the author of 'Orion,' warned him against publishing poetry for profit, and this letter indicates that in 1844 he already contemplated the issue both of 'Æschylus' and of original verses. On the other hand, Mr Macdonald of Rammerscales, an ardent and accomplished classic, encouraged him in the matter of 'Æschylus,' as did Mr Theodore Martin, from whose letter we may quote :—

I am right glad to find you at work again in this field. I have always thought it the true one for you, and cheerfully would I undertake to read your MS. and give you any suggestions if you would trust me with the duty. You are right in avoiding rhyme in the choruses; but you must be full of a true lyrical inspiration to hit those subtle rhythmical melodies which must come in their place. Popularity is not so much out of the question as you think. Give the world a fine English version of 'Æschylus,' and there is a large enough English public who will buy to make it pay.

He made a tour of the better known schools in Edinburgh and Glasgow during May 1844,

and combined with this a first visit to Ayr and the country of Burns. On his way back from Glasgow he spent a few days in Edinburgh at the time of the General Assemblies, and heard with much interest an address from the Rev. Robert Macdonald of Blairgowrie, in the Free Church Assembly gathered in Tanfield Hall. Mr Macdonald was one of the most eloquent special pleaders in the young Church, and his call upon the audience for funds to raise a Free Church College was a burst of impassioned oratory, which moved the Professor not merely to emotional sympathy, but into a contribution of £5 to the cause. He was averse to much of the more turbulent feeling which the Disruption had caused, turning at once from the coldness of Moderatism and from the over-jubilant exultation of the Dissenters; but he was true to his instinct of appreciating warmly all that was best in either party, and the scheme appealed directly to the conviction, which experience had forced upon him, that every effort after untrammelled education was to be welcomed and helped. In the session 1844-45 he re-matriculated as a semi, and attended lectures to complete his undergraduate course, interrupted twice in his youth. His senior students were his fellows at Professor Macgillivray's class of Natural History, and in

the succeeding sessions he followed the Natural Philosophy and Moral Philosophy courses as a tertian and a magistrand.

During the summer of 1845, while Mrs Blackie was at Peebles with Mr and Mrs Stodart, he remained busy in Aberdeen until August, when he started on a walking tour expressly planned to visit the Roman stations and camps, for a lecture on "The Romans in Scotland," with which he proposed to start the next session of work. He had furnished himself with many maps and books to further his researches. At Fettercairn, resting in the post-office, he drew these out of his coat-pockets. "You'll be in the book-line?" asked the worthy postmaster, and what answer could he give but that he was?

His father had retired from banking and left Aberdeen. He was then at Darnick near Melrose, and Professor Blackie joined him there in September, and after a month's peregrination in the valley of the Tweed, he went to Gilston with his wife.

The Test Acts engaged his public utterances in the autumn of this year. Opposition was made to Sir David Brewster's election as Principal of St Andrews because he adhered to the Free Church party. This roused the Professor's indignation, and he wrote an energetic pamphlet

upon "Subscription to Articles," which gave to the general movement for the abolition of University Tests a considerable propulsion.

A high degree of impatience with clerical influence on education is visible in his attitude at this time, and a strong bias in favour of secular schools. His first pamphlet on the whole question of education in Scotland belongs to this year, 1845. It was an address to his students, and was a Latin composition with a short English preface. It reprobated the exclusion from the great centres of learning of all such subjects as could help to make men more capable of the practical work to which they were called at the close of their student days. Alike in the English and the Scotch Universities, modern languages, historical research, and the sciences were either condemned to a position inferior to the Latin and Greek languages, or wholly ignored, while these languages, so supremely valued, were pedantically taught, and inspired few to use the treasures of history, poetry, and philosophy to which they gave admission.

This Latin address was followed in 1846 by a pamphlet in English, embodying his experience in Marischal College. It protested forcibly against filling the University benches with boys ignorant almost of the alphabets of Greek and Latin, and

needing the drudgery of schoolmastering. It was a mockery for Scotland to regard herself as the best-educated country of the kingdom when the grammar-schools failed to furnish boys with even the rudiments of ancient geography, and when the letters of the Greek alphabet were the whole equipment with which their scholars were sent up to the Greek class-rooms of the Universities. Here and there in Scotland the rectors of the grammar-schools were men of classical attainment. We hear of teachers whose scholars were fired by their enthusiasm to follow them not only along the beaten highroad, but into the by-paths and recesses of Latin literature; but such were few, and notable in their place and day. The general standard was low, and custom had led the public to regard the Universities as the proper field for classics, so that boys of fifteen years, and sometimes less, scrambled out of school into college in every stage, from crass to comparative ignorance. The pamphlet demanded for all the classes in the University curriculum an entrance examination by no means stringent, but at the least insisting upon some definite elementary knowledge which should stimulate the teaching in schools, and afford to the teaching in Universities ground upon which to erect its legitimate superstructure.

In Marischal College several Professors, and

particularly Dr Cruikshank, Professor of Mathematics, had already established a slight examination for students entering the Humanity classes, and these gentlemen were stimulated by this pamphlet to create similar examinations for Greek, Mathematics, and Natural Philosophy.

The pamphlet received a still wider acknowledgment. Dr Chalmers, who had for thirty years raised his voice in protest against the degradation of University teaching, wrote to its author in full sympathy:—

To the Universities there should remain the high function of elevating the Literature and Science of our land purely for their own sakes, and apart from their subserviency to any merely professional object. What a glorious country it would make if, for the expense of some £10,000 or £20,000 a-year more, we could get the Universities placed in those higher regions of philosophy and taste where they might contribute to the indefinite elevation of our national authorship in every department! I rejoice in your having advocated a high system of preliminary scholarship that might enable us all to take up higher positions in our respective territories.

Lord Cockburn endorsed the pamphlet with characteristic vigour:—

The true way to feed our colleges is to educate the people generally. Hence the incalculable importance of the approaching move about the parish schoolmaster. If



salaries are to be raised without introducing a system for raising the style of education, we only aggravate the drone-age of the drones we already have. The priests play the devil with everything of the kind. Education will be right exactly in proportion as secular sense and vigour are allowed to supersede clerical ignorance and intolerance. Go on repeating the appeals. It is only by repetition of blows that such arguments succeed. It is not by stamping—a solitary stroke—but by engraving—a thousand touches—that the public mind is impressed.

These extracts are sufficient to show how hearty a God-speed Professor Blackie received from men qualified to judge of his campaign. But from within the Universities hardly a single voice of encouragement was heard. To infringe upon the *status quo* of bodies triply guarded by age, wont, and academical infallibility was quixotic. And yet he meant to dare the adventure. They had ceased to be the centres of such culture as was needed in Scotland, if she were to maintain her ground as a self-educating nation. They neither supplied professional needs nor the training demanded for commercial and agricultural progress. Their various schools were retrograde; only medicine advanced with the age, and admitted growth in all its departments commensurate with their development abroad. In their Divinity schools

there was neither research nor criticism, but a mere empiric course of tuition. While in Germany colleges existed for full training and research in every branch of science applicable to industry and agriculture, there was no equivalent in our iron-bound institutions. And the classics which they purported to bestow were so hindered and handicapped by freedom of access, that it was ridiculous to expect such scholarship from Edinburgh and Aberdeen as Oxford could produce, thanks specially to her system of entrance examinations.

In Aberdeen, too, the matter was aggravated by disunion between the Colleges. Marischal and King's Colleges stood within a mile of each other, and yet at that time they united for no purpose whatever. Their Chairs were shabbily endowed, and each had its counterpart in the other College. Both Professors and students suffered from the disunion, and yet the Colleges eyed each other with disfavour. By union and co-operation the results would have doubled, as they learnt twelve years later, but they had become dotard with vested interests, and impotent to make larger endeavour.

In 1848 Professor Blackie returned to the campaign. Early in that year he addressed to the 'Scotsman' newspaper a series of eight letters em-

bodying not only the disabilities of the Scottish Universities when compared with those of Germany, but suggesting a plan of reform which—by entrance examinations, enlarged curriculum, elevation of the treatment of subjects, union of Colleges where it was clearly in the interest of education, emancipation from clerical dictation, and freedom from tests—should raise their entire standard. In these letters he appealed to all interested in Scottish education to demand its reform.

His gauntlet was taken up by Professor Pillans, the occupant of the Humanity Chair in the University of Edinburgh. He published a pamphlet whose chief argument against such reforms was that they would diminish the numbers in the University classes, and the fees correspondingly. His pamphlet made ingenuous admission of the low state of learning, but regarded it as a condition so hard and fast that it had to be reckoned with as beyond remedy. He felt it to be chiefly important that no attempt should be made to remedy it. He was patriotically indignant that Professor Blackie should discover matter for emulation in the German Universities, and he made the mistake of classing the English with the Scottish Universities in their want of entrance examinations. This

answer to Professor Blackie's challenge came from an important centre, although the knight appeared on the field with holes in his armour at which the champion of reform was quick to point his steel.

Professor Blackie published his eight articles in pamphlet form, prefaced by a letter which drew attention to the errors in fact and to the flimsiness in argument which characterised the Edinburgh Professor's utterance. This letter indicates clearly what Professor Blackie meant by University teaching as distinguished from the mere drill in language, which properly belongs to the school-room :—

In the studies that belong to the Greek and Latin classes, as taught in a school, the acquisition of a mere language as a future intellectual tool necessarily occupies the principal place. In other words, the language-master or grammarian in the school lays the foundation on which, in the University, the Professor of Literature, History, or Science is to pile the superstructure. Now this superstructure in *Universities normally constituted*, for the Greek and Latin classes, may be schemed as follows :—

1st. The æsthetical exhibition of ancient literature, comprising the elegant reading and declamation of the classic authors; also original composition in the Greek and Latin languages.

2d. The critical history of ancient literature.

3d. The social and political history of ancient nations.

4th. Archæology ; or the history of the arts and sciences among the ancients, as they are illustrated in existing monuments of architecture, sculpture, painting, &c.

5th. Philology; or the scientific anatomy and physiology of the ancient languages.

6th. Hermeneutics; or the science of interpretation—including whatever relates to the deciphering of ancient writings and inscriptions, and the right constituting of the text of ancient writers.

These departments of the vast subject of "humane letters," however various and diverse, agree in this one point—that before they can be entered on profitably, *they presuppose a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages, as much as a workman's work presupposes the existence of his tools.*

And after correcting Professor Pillans's mistakes with regard not only to the German Universities, but to those of Oxford and Aberdeen, he concluded by sketching, as entrance examination,

the barrier which I propose to erect against the intrusion of unripe boys and untrained clowns into our initiatory classes. I shall confine myself to Latin and Greek, leaving to others to detail any other tests of admission that may seem to them expedient. I propose that no person shall receive a matriculation ticket as a student in any Scottish University for the first year who shall not be able—

1st. To read *ad aperturam* any passage of Livy not containing any peculiar difficulty; not with perfect accuracy, of course, but in such a manner as to show a fair

average ability of using the Latin language as a means of unlocking the treasures of ancient literature.

2d. To translate a passage of common narrative English into Latin, without making any gross blunder in the flexion of words or the structure of sentences.

3d. To translate *ad aperturam* one or other of the four Gospels in Greek, and to answer questions on the grammar of the Greek language.

4th. To show a knowledge of the most general outlines of Greek and Roman history and geography.

5th. To show a knowledge of the common principles of Latin prosody and versification.

This pamphlet was widely read. There had already been many deliverances on the state of education in Scotland. Lord Brougham, Dr Chalmers, the editor of the 'Scottish Guardian,' and others, had loudly proclaimed its need of reform; practical teachers of special subjects had tried to call attention to their particular disabilities, and now the most resonant of these voices, if not yet the most influential, iterated and reiterated its appeal, demanding a herculean task, which the slow processes of Commission have barely effected in fifty years. His voice revived the clamour for reform, with its inseparable counter-clamour of resistance. Something fresh and emphatic gave a new authority to his summons, which roused not only the vigorous adhesion of all who recognised its sense, but also the irritated

attention of those who, crystallised in the threatened system, detested the clanging which disturbed their repose.

Professor Blackie's name was now associated with reform of a definite character. In his eight letters he had sketched a scheme which affected nearly every point in question, and he received letters of warm encouragement from educationists at home and abroad. The subject made constant demands on his time and attention during these years.

But in spite of this preoccupation he found leisure in the summer of 1846 to finish his translation of "The Persians" and of "Agamemnon," and in the following summer he completed his 'Æschylus.' His faculty for work grew with its employment; it is impossible to give in detail all that he accomplished in fields of labour outside his main subjects. He acted up to such inspiring sooth-words as the following, taken from the German in July 1846 :—

"Dare a great thing. The thing thou triest  
Lifts thy straining mind;  
Though thou may'st not reach the highest,  
Something high thou'lt find."

In the spring of 1847 he was in Edinburgh, giving at the Philosophical Institution a course of six lectures upon his "great cause," education.

They received much attention, and he found himself lionised by the Modern Athenians. He was glad to believe that his lectures had begun the agitation of the public mind on the question of educational reform. "To be called on," he wrote, "to break down a mountain with a pocket-hammer, —this is my Aberdeen task; here I get gunpowder."

In 1847, early in August, he started by himself on his first Highland tour. He traversed Hugh Miller's country, and visited Dingwall, Inverness, Fort William, Ballachulish, and Oban. From the little inn at Ballachulish he climbed Ben Nevis, walked to the head of Glenroy and back again, and explored Glencoe. His adventures filled constant letters to his wife, who was at Gilston. When he and some fellow-pedestrians from the inn had climbed up about 3000 feet of Ben Nevis, a sudden curtain of mist surrounded them, becoming thicker as they cautiously crept upwards, and hiding the wonderful view. But they made out the summit, and pledged each other from their flasks and toasted their absent wives, and so descended thwarted but undismayed. Indeed his cheerful spirit conceived of the mist as a benefit. "I am convinced that, for a truly sublime effect on the imagination, we were much the better of the mist."



This walking tour had been undertaken as much for the benefit of his health as for the sake of the Western Highlands. The pressure of work had brought back the ailments of his Göttingen days, and he had recourse to the remedy which then removed them. He returned to Gilston recovered in health, and full of the exceeding charm of the country which he had visited—a charm of nature at her grandest, but so arrayed in light and colour, so varied, so fresh and magnetic, that the spell which it laid upon him was never broken. In those days no crowds of tourists invaded the glens and steamed up the lochs; the land was innocent of hotels; the bay of Oban was encircled by a row of white houses; everywhere the breezy heights were purple with heather, or green with larch and oak, not dull with villa lodgings and hideous hydropathics. At Port Appin, on his way back, his luggage was sent ashore by mistake, and he was obliged to follow it, as it held the MS. of his translation of ‘Æschylus,’ and so he wasted a day which had been destined for Staffa.

The end of April and part of May in 1848 were devoted to a course of lectures on “Ancient Rome,” given in Edinburgh at the Philosophical Institution on Tuesdays and Fridays, and in Glasgow on Mondays and Thursdays. They were attended by crowded audiences, and many old friends mus-

tered on the benches—Robert Horn, William Aytoun, Dr John Brown, and others; while on one occasion the chair was filled by Christopher North himself. But the effort was too great, and he returned to Aberdeen suffering from severe headaches, which continued throughout the summer.

Towards the end of May he and Mrs Blackie went to London. His sister Helen had married Mr Kennedy, an excellent Congregational minister, and was settled in Stepney, Mr George Stodart lived in Russell Square, and they stayed some time with these relatives. The Professor called on Mr and Mrs Carlyle at Chelsea, and made the acquaintance of Dr John Carlyle, the well-known student of Dante, who was staying with his brother. He described an evening with “the Prophet” in a letter to Miss Augusta Wyld:—

Thomas Carlyle is really a notable monster, and to be respected for the many noble thoughts he has elaborated and for the words of wisdom which he has flung abroad to bear divine fruit among foolish-hearted men; but I can't help thinking, face to face in a small parlour he is rather terrible, and I fancy prophets are best exhibited in the pulpit, or in the wilderness. A few grand moral instincts burn so intensely in the hearts of these men that they have no room for anything else: they rush out from their smoking sanctuary with a flaming sword in their hand,

and whoever follows them not and fights is accounted a heretic. Scottish and English Universities, British Houses of Parliament, orthodox theologies, railroads, and free trade, were all shaken out and sifted under the category of Sham; while Oliver Cromwell and his Ironsides, and the old Covenanters who sang psalms and handled pikes on Dunse Moor, were held up to admiration as the only heroes in this country for the last two hundred years.

Amongst the many new acquaintances whom this stay in London procured for him were Dr Thirlwall and Professor Newman, the latter of whom was much to his mind:—

He is a thorough scholar, but not in the least infected with the vulgar English idolatry of deifying the past and depreciating the present. On the contrary, he takes a living interest in the politics of the present day, and shows that he considers learning as valuable only in so far as it can be made to bear on the grand interests of a progressive humanity. He is a slender man with a pale face, but looking clearness, and kindness, and sincerity.

The Chartist Riots were in full swing during the month of June that year, and Mrs Blackie was unable to accompany her husband on his wanderings throughout the Metropolis. He left her in her uncle's care about the middle of the month, and paid visits to Leicester, Lutterworth, and Oxford. He broke the journey to Lutterworth by a walk to Naseby, leaving the coach about three miles from the battle-field, to which

he was guided by a village lad, who explained the cause of the battle: "The parties couldn't agree about a new kind of Methodism, and fell a-fighting."

From Oxford he wrote to his wife, fixing a day for her journey thither, and she joined him on June 29. They lived in lodgings in High Street, their landlord being cook at one of the colleges. He was a grave personage, with a soul above saucy persons. He disapproved of the feasts and junketings of Commemoration Week, which was celebrated during their stay. "These 'ere 'alls," said he, "are 'alls of larnin', and should behave as such." As they did not share his prejudice, and had introductions to many of the University dons, their days were filled with gaieties, and the time-honoured hospitalities of Oxford were lavishly extended to them.

The Professor was delighted with the beauty of the University buildings. He wrote:—

The uncommon succession of hoary, time-battered towers and turrets gives something very solemn and almost sacred to the streets of this place.

And he added:—

One can hardly be surprised to find Toryism of all kinds, political and ecclesiastical, so prosperous here; the real wonder is, that Puseyism should be of such modern growth in such a place, and that all are not Papists.

In Oxford he made many acquaintances—Mr Jowett, then Fellow of Balliol, and the Rev. A. P. Stanley being amongst the most distinguished. The visit lasted all July. But it did not serve to rid him of the depressing headaches from which he suffered; nor did it serve to rid him of a rooted prejudice against Oxford methods and results. To Oxford, Professor Blackie refused justice then and always; and it must be conceded that whatever ground there was for his animadversions, he failed to state them in a manner which could either conciliate Oxford or convince outsiders of their worth. The graver manners, the reserve, the social etiquette, the courtesies of debate, the overstrained propriety, vexed his more aggressive nature, turned his sportive attacks into affronts, and maimed his spontaneity. He seldom appeared to advantage in Oxford, although he was always welcomed there with a hospitality most honouring to the University.

This year, 1848, was signalised by a final and successful effort to bring the fees of the Humanity classes up to the general standard of Marischal College. They were raised to three guineas for each student of the first class, and the hours were increased to twelve weekly, while attendance at the second class was made optional.

In spite of a summer full of varied experiences,

he returned to the work of a new session feeling far from well, the nervous exhaustion of too much work making him a prey to headache and to other ailments. These increased as the session progressed, and he was compelled to give up teaching for several months. These fallow months were a sore trial to his impatient spirit, but they were absolutely necessary. Early in 1849 he began to revise and correct his translation of 'Æschylus,' and to plan for its publication. Mr Carlyle heard of his project, and wrote to him on April 16, 1849 :—

You are engaged on 'Æschylus,' they tell me—which, beyond doubt, is a good book to try. A Body of Greek Literature (small rigorously selected body), Body of Greek Dramatists first of all, is what the world now emphatically demands of the Scholar-Guild, which it has kept up this long time "regardless of expense," and I must say with intrinsically and somewhat astonishing result hitherto! For what we wanted was not learned battlement about Greek Heroes and Myths, but wise speech, melodious by its depth and truth about British Heroes and Facts;—good Heavens! it is strange that men ever could have forgotten this! However, we do expect now, as I say, a kind of real Heathen Greek Bible (or set of select small books we can read) from our expensive Professors of Classicality,—terribly expensive if we compute *all* they have cost us!—and for this object I think they will never get a better model than the Divine Hebrew Bible, and the singularly successful method hit

upon for "translating" this—for carrying this over to us and making it ours.

In May Mrs Blackie took the sceptre into her own hands, and made plans for her invalided husband for the first time since their marriage. A hydropathic house had been opened at Dunoon by Dr East, which was not a mere cheap hotel, but a practical water-cure establishment. Mrs Blackie inclined to try the new cure upon the Professor, and he, willing to be set upon his feet again by whatever remedy, yielded to her wish. They spent May and June at Dunoon with Dr East, and before six weeks were over, the patient was not merely cured, but was climbing every mountain in the neighbourhood, and singing on their tops a pæan to the Doctor, which resolved itself at last into a prose pamphlet on his treatment. He sent a copy of this to Mr Carlyle, and it was thus acknowledged:—

Many thanks for your friendly remembrance of me at the Water-cure Establishment. I have often thought of that adventure; and believe it might really alleviate and almost free me for a time. But for a *cure*;—alas! that lies beyond the reach of Æsculapian or other aid, and will never be my portion in this lower world! The inner man is too tumultuous for the outer (who is but a lean fellow, as you may see); there, once for all, lies the fact, and no Doctor of Medicine, but only Medea with her renovating kettle (if that terrible process were worth

while, at this advanced stage of the business), could make a change therein. Happy he who is not lean, if not stupid; next happy he who is of *feline* fibre, more or less, and can content himself with the inevitable.

Later in the year Mr Carlyle, continuing to be interested in the translation of 'Æschylus,' took considerable trouble to find the right publisher for this canonical book of the "Heathen Bible." He selected G. W. Parker, West Strand, who agreed to publish it at the translator's own expense, as he had already lost considerably by undertaking to launch translations from the Greek. The sum required for its publication was £160, and at first there seemed little hope of providing so much. But Mrs Blackie came to the rescue with a courageous proposal. She had weighed the expense of housekeeping against that of living in lodgings, and suggested that they should sell their furniture, give up the house in the High Street, and live during the session in lodgings near Marischal College. By going to visit friends in summer they might pay for 'Æschylus' at the end of two years. Her plan was adopted, and the horsehair furniture went to the hammer. It may be suspected that she bore its loss with equanimity.

Lodgings were taken in a house in Union Street,—just two rooms, to make the economy thorough. The Professors of Marischal College



were scandalised at the indignity, and forbore to visit their colleague. But the friends in Old Aberdeen, who were admitted to confidence, tempered the cold wind of academical dudgeon by constant visits. The manuscript of 'Æschylus' was placed in Parker's hands, and by June it was issued.

Letters from Mr Carlyle, Professor Newman, Leigh Hunt, Arthur Clough, "Orion," and many other qualified judges, poured in upon the translator during the year. Perhaps quotations from Leigh Hunt's letters will have the charm of rarity :—

I have read with great interest and refreshment the "Prolegomena," full of musical matters of which I am fond, and to which there is a wonderful dearth of attention amongst almost all English poets,—those counted most musical not excepted,—and am now full-tilt, or rather full-tumbling, amidst those billows of song which you have set rolling, and foaming, and harmoniously conflicting, and disclosing their almost too dazzling treasures of expression and imagery, after right Æschylean mode ;—certainly no "waveless sea" beneath a "windless air."

And later he wrote :—

With the exception of some condescensions to conventional helps of phraseology, chiefly in the rhymed passages, I should say that your version is right masculine and Æschylean, strong, musical, conscious of the atmosphere of mystery and terror which it breathes in, and in

all respects deeply feeling. I admire the just and impassioned prominence which your learning and love of music combined have enabled you to give to the lyrical nature of these fine, Cassandra - voiced, ringing old dramas; though I could not but think sometimes of Butler's verses about the gods chancing to

"Have piques  
Against an ancient family of Greeks,  
That other men may tremble and take warning  
How such a fatal progeny they're born in."

Mr Carlyle was equally eulogistic of the blank-verse translation, but, unlike Leigh Hunt, protested against the rhythmic choruses, of which he wrote :—

I have also dipped here and there into the rhythmic matter; find it spirited and lively to a high degree, and indeed replete with ingenuity and talent;—the grimmer is my protest against your having gone into song at all with the business.

The rhymes which he abhorred were not attempted in the first cast. They were due to Professor Aytoun's advice. Supping with the Jacobite poet one evening, Professor Blackie had read a couple of the dramas to him, and had invited his criticism. He urged him to alter the blank-verse choruses into rhyme, and except in "Prometheus Bound," his opinion prevailed.

## CHAPTER XI.

## 'ÆSCHYLUS' AND THE GREEK CHAIR.

1850-1852.

'ÆSCHYLUS,' begun in 1838, had taken twelve years to transmute into English, but only the first three and the last three of those years were specially devoted to the work. It was dedicated to Chevalier Bunsen and Professor Gerhard. The translator likened his labour to that of Medea with her "renovating kettle," "who, having cut a live body to pieces, engaged to produce it again reinvigorated in all its completeness."

In translating 'Faust,' he had aimed at a "recasting" rather than at a "transposing" of the original. So his aim in translating 'Æschylus' was, in Southey's words, "faithfully to represent the matter, manner, and spirit of the original," rather than to offer "in the guise of

the English language an image of Æschylus in every minute verbal feature." He desired that his version of the great dramas should do Æschylus justice in so far that the reader should be satisfied that their author was a man of genius, essentially Greek, imbued with lofty conceptions of the divine sovereignty of Zeus, of the immortal influence of human action, of the impossibility of escape from the barriers within which man's lot is cast,—those barriers of human relationship and divine limitation which are imposed on all. And he sought to do this through the medium of a language unsuited to express all that Greek meant when wielded by Æschylus,—unsuited to reproduce his tremendous phrases, his marvellous combinations, but sufficiently worthy to deprive the translator of all apology for failure. In the Preface he says:—

If I have failed in these pages to bring out what is Greek and what is Æschylean prominently, in combination with force, grace, and clearness of English expression, it is for lack of skill in the workman, not for want of edge in the tool.

So far he surely attained, and farther; for he achieved some very beautiful renderings in rhymed verse of the more lyrical passages, whether inspired by the sentiment of wonder, of terror, of sympathy, or of grief. In "Prom-

etheus Bound" he avoided rhyme, the grandeur of its heroic antitheses—Prometheus paying the mighty penalty of his beneficence, Io doomed to suffering for reasons which her will had not conditioned—making rhyme inadequate to their proportions. But in every other play, rhyme "corresponding or analogous" to the lyric metre of Æschylus is used, and where it cannot follow the measure of the original, the language employed is called upon to convey its emotional character.

Of this rhyme some stanzas may be presented, taken first from one of the irregular and rugged choruses of "Agamemnon," and afterwards from a pæan of vengeance chanted by "The Eumenides":—

"Thus he  
Gave his own daughter's blood, his life, his joy,  
To speed a woman's war, and consecrate  
His ships for Troy.

In vain with prayers, in vain she beats dull ears  
With a father's name; the war-delighting chiefs  
Heed not her virgin years.  
Her father stood; and when the priests had prayed,  
Take her, he said; in her loose robes enfolden,  
Where prone and spent she lies, so lift the maid;  
Even as a kid is laid,  
So lay her on the altar; with dumb force  
Her beauteous mouth gag, lest it breathe a voice  
Of curse to Argos.

And as they led the maid, her saffron robe  
 Sweeping the ground, with pity-moving dart  
     She smote each from her eye,  
 Even as a picture beautiful, fain to speak,  
 But could not. Well that voice they knew of yore ;  
     Oft at her father's festive board,  
 With gallant banqueters ringed cheerly round,  
     The virgin strain they heard  
     That did so sweetly pour  
 Her father's praise, whom Heaven had richly crowned  
     With bounty brimming o'er.

The rest I know not nor will vainly pry ;  
 But Calchas was a seer not wont to lie.  
     Justice doth wait to teach  
 Wisdom by suffering. Fate will have its way.  
 The quickest ear is pricked in vain to-day,  
     To catch to-morrow's note. What boots  
 To forecast woe, which, on no wavering wing,  
     The burdened hour shall bring."

In these strophes and antistrophes rhyme is incidentally used, but with effect which consummates the choral form. In the grand strophe and antistrophe from "The Eumenides" which follow, rhyme is regular and sways the form :—

" Whoso, with no forced endeavour,  
     Sin-eschewing liveth,  
 Him to hopeless ruin never  
     Jove the Saviour giveth.  
 But whose hand with greed rapacious,  
     Draggeth all things for his prey,  
 He shall strike his flag rapacious  
     When the god-sent storm shall bray,

Winged with fate at last ;  
 When the stayless sail is flapping,  
 When the sailyard swings and snapping,  
 Crashes to the blast.

He shall call, but none shall hear him,  
 When dark ocean surges ;  
 None with saving hand shall near him,  
 When his prayer he urges.  
 Laughs the god to see him vainly  
 Grasping at the crested rock ;  
 Fool who boasted once profanely  
 Firm to stand in Fortune's shock ;  
 Who so great had been,  
 His freighted wealth with fearful crashing,  
 On the rock of justice dashing,  
 Dies unwept, unseen."

The grand antiphonal chant which closes the  
 "Persians," in which Xerxes and the chorus of  
 "Sons of Susa with delicate feet" lament

"So great a power, the Persian power laid low,"

might be given, were there space ; it is the best  
 example of Professor Blackie's use of rhyme as  
 an emotional medium. It has the effect of wail  
 upon wail,—of long-drawn sighs and protracted  
 grief.

The most scholarly critic of the time, Mr Con-  
 ington, gave his opinion in the 'Edinburgh Re-  
 view' of July 1850. He rendered justice to the  
 Professor's adherence more to the Æschylean

manner and spirit than to absolute verbal precision, and admitted his great advance upon earlier translators. He spoke of the scholarship as "remarkably good," and of the introduction and notes "as a real acquisition to our means of studying the Greek Drama," and he praised the vigour and significance of the rendering. At the same time, he took exception to the licence of explanatory comment incorporated in the text of translation, and to the coupling a choice of renderings, which he stigmatised as "hedging." The translator, he held, was bound to choose one of the two possible renderings and abide by it, except in passages where great ingenuity in his selection of words might enable him to shadow forth or suggest both meanings.

Another friend expressed his wish that the Professor would publish original rather than translated poetry—"for," said he, "you have not grammar enough to be a good translator"; on which came the comment, "No, indeed, I hate grammar, logic, rhetoric, law, and all such dry formalisms."

From the very first year of Professor Blackie's residence in Aberdeen he had assembled at his own house small parties of his most promising students for the purpose of reading and discussing the classics. At these gatherings, informal



in their earlier stage, they conned and cogitated Cicero, Horace, and Virgil; but about 1848 the Professor bethought him that, having victoriously grappled with Latin, they might try conclusions with Greek. The new Society, loosely organised at first and called the "Homeric Club," was formally enrolled as "The Hellenic Society" in January 1850. Its inaugural meeting took place in Mr Forbes White's house, and initiated the habit of assembling at the homes in turn of such members as were householders. On this first occasion some ten students met the Professor, and it is interesting to record the future eminence of four of their number—Mr Donaldson, now Principal of St Andrews, Mr Geddes, Principal of Aberdeen, Mr Davidson, Professor of Hebrew in the Edinburgh Free Church College, and Mr Sachs, Free Church Professor of Hebrew in Aberdeen. These gentlemen were all students of the Humanity Class, and those surviving, as in the cases of Mr Forbes White and Mr Charles Robertson, have maintained the scholarship which they learned to appreciate in those days. They began their labours with Homer. When the Society was transplanted to Edinburgh, its numbers increased, many notable scholars becoming members, and it passed into a phase which admitted of conviviality as well as of serious study. But in the

primitive days, which are still under record, the "high thinking" was supported by "plain living," and bread, cheese, and ale were the simple ancestry of the stuffed turkey and champagne to which the law of evolution conducted the original supper. Even over bread and cheese the members were wont to relax into song and story, so that the toasts and speeches of later times had their due relation to humble types.

In July Professor Blackie went to Dunoon to seek Dr East's help after these engrossing labours, and soon reported himself refreshed and ruddy-cheeked, and exploring Glen Massen and the Holy Loch.

A prayer which took shape on the hills one Sabbath morning expresses his relation to God and to life :—

O Thou, who not in temples made with hands  
Hast made Thy dwelling,  
Where the robed priest with pictured prayer-book stands  
Thy praises telling ;  
Here in this rock-ribbed, moss-grown mountain nook,  
While I implore Thee,  
Hear me who pray without or priest or book  
In fear before Thee.  
O ! if from Thy deep-seated central throne  
Thy radiation  
Lends to life's extreme crust and utmost zone  
Rich animation,—

Shine, Lord, in me till my glad heart o'erbrim  
 With living fulness,  
 And drops—like lead from each quick-starting limb—  
 The earthly dulness !  
 Not more than man I ask, but as a man  
 Life's worth confessing,  
 I'd nobly use my little human span  
 With God's high blessing !

From Dunoon he made out a long intended visit to Arran, walking round its coast and climbing Goatfell, as well as visiting its schools and schoolmasters in furtherance of his educational research. One Sunday, being determined *not* to go to church, he sallied forth from his quarters bent on a long walk, but hardly got into marching order when he came upon a large open-air assembly gathered round the Rev. Dr Duncan, the learned Free Church Professor of Hebrew, who was

actually sitting beneath the north gable of a cottage, and conducting this rural worship. I had no objection to make myself a member of this church for the moment, so laid myself down on the green hillside and listened to the pious expounder for a period of not less than three hours ! I cannot say I felt the least tired ; because I lay at my ease gazing at the clear sea, the blue sky, and the green slopes of Holy Isle, and listening to the soft murmurous ripple of the ocean wave, and because when I fixed my regard on the gaunt, uncouth figure of the earnest Calvinist preacher, I found sufficient occupation for heart and imagination to prevent me from noting the time. Duncan is slow, heavy, and full of repetition ; but he

has noble, wingèd thoughts that flash forward from the prose of the great mass of his talk. I am glad that I heard him, and hope long to be benefited by the recollection of his serious truthfulness.

Early in August he was in Edinburgh, staying with his father and attending school examinations. He found himself lionised at these functions, for the fame of his 'Æschylus' was abroad. Reviews by George Henry Lewes and other scholars had supplemented the critical appreciation of Conington with larger praise, and many of the learned visitors, who were celebrating in Edinburgh the instructive junketings of the British Association, sought his acquaintance. Mrs Blackie was visiting her sister-in-law, Mrs Ross, at Beverley, and in his letter to them the Professor retailed his impressions of these new acquaintances. In Arran he had revived his early interest in Geology, and finding his friend Edward Forbes in the Geological Section, he attached himself more particularly to its proceedings, although he had been enlisted on the Committee of the Ethnological Section.

To see [he wrote] Edward Forbes, old M'Laren of the 'Scotsman,' John Longmuir of Aberdeen, and the Duke of Argyll standing on and preaching from the same geological pulpit is, in this country of aristocratic and ecclesiastical partitions, a pure delight. Then I admire

the clearness, distinctness, tranquillity, and commanding certitude which displays itself in the best types of the English mind, and more particularly as exhibited in Sir Roderick Murchison, the President of the Geological Section. He was our captain yesterday, as we tramped in a band of forty or fifty up and round about the Calton Hill and Arthur's Seat, and every now and then, as anything peculiar in the rocky volume emerged, he stopped and gathered us round in a ring, and began a field-preaching. I admired very much the clear, direct, soldier-like manner in which he communicated the results of his European observations of many years within the compass of a few short sentences,—a perfect ideal of manly decision without the slightest tinge of dogmatism. Last night I was at one of Dr Gregory's evening parties, which are held every night during the Association. It was a strange mixture of all persons and parties. The Duke of Argyll was there, a notable well worth seeing; worth hearing too, I hope, as he is to read a paper on basaltic rocks in the Hebrides the first to-morrow morning. He is a very young man—about twenty-seven, I should think—of small make and stature, with the most beautiful golden hair and light-blue eyes, a fair, fresh, but delicate complexion, and a refined and intellectual expression. An Athenian professor to whom I was introduced is son-in-law to Skene of Rubislaw. He had his son with him in the beautiful Greek dress, and I spoke a good deal to them both in Modern Greek, and was perfectly well understood. He says I would learn to speak the language fluently in two months.

This gentleman was Professor Rangabè, and the acquaintance ripened later.

When the proceedings of the Association were at an end he joined his wife at Beverley, and in October both returned to the Aberdeen lodgings for the winter.

The session began in November, and the Professor of Humanity initiated its work with a lecture upon the methods of learning languages written and delivered in Latin. It was printed with the motto, from Sir Thomas Browne's '*Religio Medici*,' "Now Nature is not at variance with Art nor Art with Nature." This oration, in vigorous Latin, dealt with the rational as opposed to the pedantic method of teaching languages. He suggests the parallel from Nature, where, without other art than mother-wit devises, a child is taught by loving and playful repetition the language of his little world of nursery and home and family, and is furnished with a multitude of names and associations before he is expected to express by inflection their relations to each other, or the subtleties of time and manner which concern their actions. Just so should a beginner be furnished with a vocabulary of the language which he studies, ear and eye being called into service, and not until he is familiar with the names of things in the new world which he seeks to explore can he be called upon to cope with the niceties of their

multiform conditions, whether active or passive. To further this later stage of research books are of the greatest importance; but their use must be living, and all that is read must be at once converted into material for speaking. It is better to *use* a small vocabulary than to construe eternally in unassimilated doses the whole literature of a language. Words once acquired must promptly be put to use, and for this purpose it is important to seek the society of those to whom the language is native, whether German, French, or Greek. But if this be impossible, literature must supplement the defect, and must be read aloud, committed to memory, and declaimed, altered, and readapted for exercise until both the words and style of every author in turn have yielded their utmost of gain. The lecture more particularly censured the practice of making English the chief medium of teaching Latin in the classes of Scottish Universities, where—until the rational and scholarly use of the language by the Professor should at once accustom and encourage his class to its practice—it was hopeless to expect classical proficiency.

At the beginning of the session of 1851, Professor Blackie delivered a lecture in English which not only retraced the ground covered by his Latin oration, but opened up the whole

question of the method of studying and teaching languages. Let man be taught to imitate God, who teaches in Nature and whose methods alone are profitable. The "living process of nature acting by divinely implanted instinct" is a model which no pedagogic machinery can excel, or even approach; and the boy will learn, as the infant does, by ear and eye at first, and just in measure as his environment yields favouring conditions to his imitative faculties. It is when the learner has passed into the further stage of developed intellect, with powers demanding strenuous employment of the material already acquired, that a systematic plan is needed. Then books, grammars, and pedantic accuracy are of worth, if they are supplemented with illustrations, objects, pictures of objects, bright commentaries from the teacher, and always with the extempore use of the language taught, whether in explanation or commentary. From this stage the student reaches the philology first of the particular language in hand, and finally of languages taken in groups, attaining to the comprehensive subject of Comparative Philology, should his mental bent lead him to pursue the research. Coupled with these important suggestions, the Professor recommended special treatment in special cases, and indicated the rational course



to be taken when Latin and Greek dulled rather than stimulated the faculties of a boy.

Let the hopeless dunce of the grammar-school be tried with natural history, with geography, drawing, music, turning, fencing, and perhaps he will display the latent instinct which your portentous machinery of grammars and dictionaries has hitherto smothered.

The Greek and Humanity classes of the Scottish Universities should not be cumbered with such students, but their benches should be filled with youths wisely led through the earlier stages of instruction, students eighteen or nineteen years old, who have reached that point in their development when they begin to be susceptible to what is noble and beautiful in the thoughts and style of classical writers. Only when remodelled in some such way can the Universities of Scotland "send forth a race of scholars, thinkers, and theologians whom Europe shall respect."

This lecture embodied incidentally a notable allusion to the low social status to which men expected to be "profoundly versed in Homer and Demosthenes" are condemned in Scotland by the inadequate salaries which they receive.

They are practically a proscribed race. Say what you please of your respect for education and educators, your respected pedagogue has only £100 or £200 a-year. In my opinion it requires talent of as high an order, and

moral character much higher, to make a young man love learning, as to shoot a Sikh or to cut down a Caffre. But the world has hitherto been of a different opinion, and till it choose to alter this opinion, we must expect to find inferior teaching of languages, as of everything else, predominant in the schools. The only way to remedy this evil is to raise the £200 a-year to £500, and teaching will at once become a gentlemanly profession.

This lecture, printed in 1852, along with the Latin address of the foregoing session, is a remarkable forecast of just those reforms which now engage the attention of teachers and educationists. Nearly half a century ago this Scotch Professor stated in clear terms the defects and futility of both pedagogic and academic methods in his country, and foreshadowed with precision the very changes in these which are now demanded. At that time he was almost the only man who raised his voice upon the two subjects of a reformed secondary education and of entrance examination for every University class; and incidentally to his treatment of these, he dealt the prevailing teaching of Prosody—casual and anomalous—a stroke which heralded his later persistent onslaught.

When the session of 1850-51 came to an end, Professor and Mrs Blackie carried out a plan which had taken some years to mature. Their summers had been spent up to that year in a

desultory manner, and not always with a fresh result of stimulating experience. So long as they retained the house in Old Aberdeen, they were obliged to limit their excursions. Although the Professor's wanderings on foot were inexpensive, his wife, unequal to their fatigue, was usually relegated to the houses of his or her relatives for lengthy visits. But when 'Æschylus' was published and paid for, the economy of lodgings began to tell, and since these could be abandoned after the session's residence, they found themselves free to cross the Channel and make their way to Bonn. Mrs Blackie's youngest sister and her husband's half-brother George joined them. The Professor's aim was to study philology, to enlarge his acquaintance with the subject of education in Germany, and to seek the society of several Professors in Bonn with whom he had corresponded for some years. The little party found quarters with a delightful outlook on the Rhine. Their rooms had just been vacated by the Havelocks, and they settled into them with the lively sense of expectation which attends a perfectly new experiment in housekeeping, when the environment is fresh and generates surprises. The ladies picked up German, attended coffee-parties, made acquaintance with the domesticated and sentimental housewives of

Bonn, took excursions which these joined with contribution of sausage and salad, gathered lilies of the valley on the Seven Mountains, and ventilated their minds with a breezy inrush of local chronicle and tradition. They met the Chevalier Bunsen, who paid Bonn a visit during their stay, and this meeting made the whole summer significant to Mrs Blackie, who felt that high harmony of powers and motives which rendered him influential, and who recorded in later life the shyness which seized her at the first interview with her husband's "own ideal knight."

Firm friendship was sworn with Professors Brandes, Ritschl, and Bernays, and the quartette left the Rhine University town with sincere regret. Professor Blackie wished to make a tour of inspection in Saxony; so they made their way to Liebenstein late in July, and found a point of departure in that little Thuringian watering-place, where his wife and her sister might stay while he explored the world of Saxon gymnasia.

In Halle, Gotha, and Weimar he found enough to occupy him for a fortnight. He walked to Gotha from Liebenstein, taking the Inselsberg, Ruhla, and Eisenach on his way. From Gotha he tramped to Halle, where he lingered some days, welcomed by Dr Duncker and Professor

Roediger, and hearing Tholuck both lecture and preach. From Halle he circled back to Liebenstein by Weimar. "I have seen to-day," he wrote, "Goethe's house and Schiller's house and Wieland's house and Herder's house, and all the Heiligthümer;" and he spent the following day in digressing to Jena, where he interviewed a Greek Professor "full of genius and character."

Liebenstein depressed him, its "endless idleness and aimless prattle" were antipathetic, and the party left for Holland, where the long holiday was brought to a close.

After their return to Aberdeen, the work of the new session, which included the remarkable lecture already reviewed, was interrupted by news of the death of Professor Dunbar, the occupant of the Greek chair in Edinburgh University. This took place on December 7, 1851. His retirement had for some time been expected, as he was old and ailing, but death antedated the step. This was the opportunity to which Professor Blackie had long had regard. His work in Greek was done as well from hope to seize this golden chance as from choice. "I wanted," he wrote in the "Notes," "to exchange Latin for Greek, copper for gold." To this end 'Æschylus' had been translated and published in self-denial, and now that the coveted chair was empty, it was not

wonderful that he should be roused to the liveliest exertion.

The Greek chair was in the gift of the Lord Provost, Bailies, and members of the Town Council of Edinburgh. Mr Duncan M'Laren was Lord Provost at the time, and the Free Church and United Presbyterian Church were largely represented in the membership of the municipal body. Most of these gentlemen were respectable tradesmen, who honestly desired to choose the best man, and who in other appointments had shown their competence to do so. But it was difficult for them—their interests being embarked upon currents widely removed from that of classical culture and its claims in the realm of higher education—to decide upon the fitness of the numerous candidates who flooded their table with applications and with wave upon wave of testimonials. Besides, they were hampered by sectarian prepossessions, still keen and bitter after the Disruption of 1843. Excellent and useful citizens as they were, they had their prejudices; and these were the prejudices of men to whom the decent externals of broadcloth and a rigorous observance of Presbyterian formulas, and preferably of U.P. or F.C. Presbyterianism, represented the whole duty of man. A very natural objection to genius was involved in these

prejudices, and particularly to genius which eschewed the Sabbatic surtout, and which arrayed itself in checkered trousers and plaid.

The Professor's friends in Edinburgh banded themselves together in an informal committee to advise him upon every step of his application. A more generous, devoted, and honourable backing never sped the fortunes of any candidate. Dr Daniel Wilson, his brother Professor George Wilson, Dr Robert Lee, Mr Horn, Mr George Harvey, — afterwards President of the Royal Scottish Academy, — Mr Macara, Mr Knox, Mr Hunter of Craigcrook, and Mr Stodart, were some of the hardest workers on this committee; and to them quite as much as to the Professor's qualifications the final success was due. Other men contributed their quota of influence, but on those mentioned fell the heat and burden of the fray. For the number and distinction of the candidates, the prejudices and indecision of the patrons, — who were somewhat unwilling to be reasoned with by powerful special pleaders, — and the unanswerable disabilities of the Professor, who was a genius and figured accordingly in a costume abhorred of Town Councillors at that date, a costume rank of heresies and the very livery of frivolity, made the struggle hot and protracted.

The most powerful rival candidates were Mr

Hannah, Rector of the Academy ; Mr Bonamy Price of Rugby ; Professor Macdouall of Queen's College, Belfast ; and Dr W. Smith from the New Collège in London, whose reputation was chiefly based upon his classical dictionaries. Nineteen applicants in all appeared on the field. Dr Smith and Professor Macdouall were the favourites of the Dissenting Town Councillors.

The Professor issued his first batch of testimonials, and made the initial mistake of forwarding them to the patrons without prepaying the postage. This oversight inevitably detracted from their impressiveness, and Professors Gerhard, Brandes, and Ritschl testified in vain. His next blunder was to come to Edinburgh at Christmas-time habited in the obnoxious tartan. He called on all the thirty-three Town Councillors, and dissipated his immediate chance of securing the promise of their votes. It must be conceded that his own manner was his worst enemy in the circumstances. Five minutes of jaunty, reckless discourse, an attack on the narrow-mindedness of the patron under appeal, a sudden shake of his shoulder and a shove, and a burst of laughter for farewell, were not reassuring to a civic dignitary perspiring with responsibility. They were not evidences of scholarship, although mayhap of genius, and only proved the eternal



fitness of genius to starve. Besides, the legend of the Tests, whose true history had suffered change in a decade of years, shed a sinister lustre on his repute, and his aggressive defiance of sober inquiry fed the lurid flame.

In January his chance was almost gone. It required weeks of careful work on the part of his committee to nurse it back into existence. The workers knew his real value, and were most anxious to shield his candidature from his own assistance. They wrote letters of almost pathetic entreaty to deprecate his personal interference, to beseech him to remain quietly in Aberdeen, and on no account to repeat the blundering canvass of Christmas. Signs are not wanting that he longed for the fray, and reduced his friends to despair by reiterated proposals to return, and it exercised all their ingenuity to achieve his submission to their better judgment.

Do not come up to Edinburgh till the election is over [wrote one]; it is a pity you came up last time,—some of the *tailor* electors were quite scandalised at your costume. If you do come just now, for any sake bring decent clothes with you. But your best policy is to stay in Aberdeen.

He was induced to stay in Aberdeen, whence he furnished the electors, and all his more influential friends, with copies of his testimonials, in

full, in supplement, in abstract, and prepaid. In this he only adopted the policy of the other candidates. The Town Councillor who struggled through that literature, wave after wave of florid recommendation from nineteen different sources, must have lost his breath in the passage and lain panting on the farther side. But each had his helm by which to steer, and it is an honourable record for that Town Council that it preserved its independence in spite of a vortex of persuasive influences. Very slowly the prejudice against Professor Blackie was overcome. A new issue of his letters and pamphlets on the question of education did much to help the change. That he was a Scotchman already famous in two countries of Europe effected something; that he was not at hand to ruffle their susceptibilities worked for him. The men were thoroughly conscientious: if some were stupid, the greater number were anxious to be unbiassed by petty considerations; but they were both mortal and modern, and the area of their accessible emotions had not profited by such adventitious hardening as unduly favoured the heroes of old.

In February one of their number, Bailie Morison, paid a visit to Aberdeen to acquaint himself with the estimate held of the Professor by the staid fathers of that city. He found that both

as instructor and as Sabbatarian he fulfilled their requirements. The Bailie from that time espoused his cause, and by the end of the month his candidate and the four already mentioned had distanced the rest, who prepared to retire from the contest. The choice lay finally between Dr William Smith, Professor Macdouall, and Professor Blackie. A considerable number of the electors had decided to make the last their candidate at the second vote, and the Lord Provost had accepted him in this order.

The Council met on Tuesday, March 2, 1852, to decide the event. Lord Provost M'Laren proposed Dr William Smith, and Bailie Morrison proposed John Stuart Blackie. Bailie Boyd proposed Professor Macdouall, while Mr Bonamy Price and Mr Hannah were duly brought forward by their supporters. The first vote gave a majority for Dr Smith, to whom Professor Macdouall was second and Professor Blackie third. The remaining candidates had not secured the requisite number of votes, and their names were erased from the list. The second vote altered the position. The promises were implemented, and Professors Blackie and Macdouall found themselves with eleven votes apiece, while Dr Smith fell back and was expunged from the competition. The third vote gave each sixteen, and the Lord

Provost recorded his casting-vote with a generous intimation of his great pleasure in so deciding the issue.

The contest was close, but it ended in victory. A quarter of an hour afterwards Dr Daniel Wilson wrote to the just elected Professor of Greek :—

Three cheers, and three times three ! Blackie for ever ! After three days of intense anxiety and excitement, I cannot think of sitting down to my regular jog-trot work till I have reached out my arm to Aberdeen, and had a hearty shake with our Professor. Long life and health and happiness to you and your true-hearted wife, who hoped with us to the last against hope. To Bailie Morrison you cannot return too hearty thanks. And next to him to Mr Horn and George Harvey. Mr Horn did the most, but he was used to it and liked the work, whereas every councillor Harvey called upon was worse to him than taking a dose of aloes, and yet he did it like a Briton out of his love to you.

From Dr Schmitz, the Rector of the Edinburgh High School\* and one of the disappointed candidates, came a generous greeting :—

I look upon your election as that which, next to my own appointment, is the most desirable thing that could happen. If any one else had got the place, I should have felt mortified, but I feel no such thing now, and I am looking forward to the time when we shall live in the same place and work together to one common end.

A current of congratulations set in towards the

lodgings in Aberdeen. The first to arrive was Mr Stodart's. It was given in charge to the guard of the train which reached Aberdeen at nine o'clock on the evening of the eventful day, and the news banished sleep from the Professor's pillow that night. The landlady was ill, and Mrs Blackie had promised to tie a white handkerchief outside the window should tidings of victory arrive, so that next day their friends in Aberdeen should learn at a glance how the battle had sped without knocking at the door. Inquirers came to the end of the street, saw the ensign's flutter, and went home glad in their success.

Mrs Blackie rejoiced almost more than her husband. Aberdeen was not congenial to her temperament. She needed a wider social environment, a life richer in friends, in mental stimulus and occupation. She longed for the companionship of relatives, of whom she saw but little during their stay in the north. Her release from straitened conditions is the burden of every letter which she received on the day following the election. The first ten years of her married life had been years of material discipline to her, and if they had developed some of her most influential qualities, it had been at considerable cost. Now better times had dawned, and it was not wonderful that the wife rather than the husband hailed

their promise of larger means and of ampler opportunities. The Professor himself was glad and thankful; but now that the battle was over, he adjusted himself to its result more tranquilly. All life and all activity came to him so naturally; he enjoyed every hour of every day to so full an extent; he was so emphatically the source of his own enjoyment, which was in struggle rather than in attainment, that the results of his activity scarcely surprised and seldom elated him.

But he was fully conscious of the debt which he owed to the strenuous labours of his committee, and for some days his pen was busy with acknowledgments of these. Indeed he owed more to these labours than perhaps was evident at the time. After the election was over, even his opponents were heard to admit that in the points of learning and distinction he was the best of the candidates; but while its campaigns were in progress, it took all the zeal and all the persistence of his supporters to overcome the paltry prejudices which the lenses of sectarianism and personal pique distorted and magnified, and which were almost powerful enough to suppress his greater claims, and to admit to the Greek Chair a man inferior in learning and qualified by the accident of Dissent rather than by the deliberate acquisition of sound and varied scholarship.

Amongst the supporters to whom the result was especially due was Mr Thomas Knox, of the firm of Knox, Samuel, & Dickson in Hanover Street. It is interesting to learn that his enthusiastic support was given as much from his conviction of the Professor's moral worth as from that of his classical attainments. This conviction he had received from an unusual source. A trusted servant in his house had learnt her work in the lodging-house in Dublin Street, whose attics had been John Blackie's home in Edinburgh for some years before he secured the Aberdeen appointment. She had often discussed his diligence, his temperate life, his independence, his constant good-humour, his consideration for others, with her mistress, who, infected by her maid's enthusiasm, espoused his cause with such goodwill that she proved an effective spur in the race. Mr Knox, too, was animated by strong admiration for Mr Robert Horn, with whom he worked in thorough sympathy; and Mr Horn was so identified with Professor Blackie's cause, that when the news of his victory reached the Parliament House a few minutes after two o'clock on that Tuesday afternoon, he was surrounded and congratulated with as much emphasis and cordiality as if he had won the Chair for himself.

Such friends were worthy of the letters, full of gratitude, which they received from the Professor and his wife. Old Mr Blackie, staff in hand, made a glad pilgrimage to every shrine whose oracle had spoken for his son. His joy can be imagined,—his cup was full.



## CHAPTER XII.

EDINBURGH.

1852-1857.

PROFESSOR BLACKIE was the champion of the "forward movement" on the whole campaign of education, and particularly from the old camping-ground of University teaching, and it was in this position that men in advance of their day hailed him with hopeful welcome. His very freedom from sectarian exclusiveness, which had threatened to bar the way, helped to pacify the sectarians after the race was won. Just at first there were sinister murmurs that the Westminster Confession would brandish its flaming sword—with a dying menace—at the gates of Edinburgh University; but these subsided, and his earlier signature was accepted without demur. As he offered a friendly front alike to the Dis-

senting and to the Established Churches, no denomination could resist his genial unconsciousness of any lingering objection entertained by its own variety of Presbyterianism.

Aberdeen had long outlived its earlier prejudices against his opinions. The man himself was sound, in charity with all men, devout, diligent, a Christian. In Aberdeen there was a widespread regret mingled with the civic pride and congratulation. Divines and scholars alike acknowledged the distinction which he had conferred upon Marischal College, and which shone more conspicuously in the light of his promotion,—for the Aberdonians were not backward to admit merits which Edinburgh claimed from their midst.

His students at Marischal College had signed one of his most influential testimonials, and now offered him a valedictory gift of books. Those of his old students who were attending the Divinity classes in the Edinburgh Free Church College eagerly watched the contest for the Greek Chair, and were found tossing up their caps with enthusiasm at the result. They held, as is recorded in the letter of a fellow-student, that Blackie was the one candidate who could fill the Chair to their content; that although he could not transfer his own learning into less capacious

heads, he had the power to animate even the dullest with something of his fire and fervour; that Edinburgh was in great need of just such a spirit in its classical lecture-rooms, where an amiable pedantry had brought study to something very like a standstill.

Personal friends at Aberdeen felt the loss of Professor and Mrs Blackie very keenly, and a large circle in Edinburgh prepared to receive them with hearty welcome. This circle numbered some old friends from Aberdeen, amongst them Professor and Mrs Gregory.

The Edinburgh of 1852 differed much from the Edinburgh of to-day. It was a smaller city, poor rather than rich, its social activities directed by an aristocracy of all the talents rather than by fashion and wealth. The Church, law, medicine, the University, literature and art, combined to produce its keen mental climate. Men's minds were braced into vigorous use in that contentious but wholesome air. They were distinguished and sought after, as they were individual, with wit, wisdom, skill, and conviction for their characteristics. They had not then the cheap qualifications for success which wealth bestows, and which send a languorous current throughout the social body, depressing what is noble and natural, accentuating what is conventional and unnecessary, vulgarising the energy which should be

turned to real uses. Dr Guthrie, Dean Ramsay, Dr William Hanna, Lord Neaves, Lord Cockburn, Dr John Brown, Professor Aytoun, Mr Robert Chambers, Miss Catherine Sinclair, Mr D. O. Hill, Mr George Harvey, Mr Noël Paton and his brother, Horatio Macculloch, Alexander Smith, are but a few significant names culled from the long social roll-call of that day. To cite all that was brilliant and particular would be to fill a chapter with names not yet forgotten. Christopher North was there, although his locks were tawny-white, and his massive form was seldom seen in the streets; but his blue eyes glistened still when he heard a new canto in the everlasting epic of the rod, and about his brows there hovered that far-derived heredity which linked him to Homeric days.

Amongst such friends the Blackies found a place prepared. They came to Edinburgh in March, and stayed with Mr Stodart in Drummond Place. In April the Professor gave a successful course of lectures at the Philosophical Institution on "The Literature of Greece"; and in May, after his installation, he went to Cambridge, where he was the guest of Mr and Mrs Macmillan, and discussed with his host various forthcoming works which he already planned, and some of which indeed were begun.

One of his earliest cares was to come to a

decision about the pronunciation of Greek, and of this his own account may be quoted from the "Notes":—

This question presented itself to me in a more decided attitude than it might have done to many a scholar; partly because I could not do anything merely on the principle of accepting a received tradition, partly because I had always felt convinced that the ear, and not the eye or the understanding, is the main avenue by which the knowledge of languages must be conveyed to a learner. Besides, there was an absolute lawlessness of practice in the matter which it could not be my duty to encourage, one party pronouncing Greek in the Scottish way because it was patriotic, and the other in the English way because it was genteel. To the patriotic party, in so far as patriotism might have a saying in such matters, I was naturally inclined. I accordingly set myself without a moment's delay to examine the whole affair scientifically and historically. The result of my investigations appeared in a small volume published at Edinburgh in the year 1852, as a sufficiently distinct manifesto, before I commenced my teaching. The conclusions which I came to were simple and certain. The Scottish pronunciation and the English were alike founded on a historical tradition standing on no firm philological basis. The Scotch, by their more happy preservation of the Catholic pronunciation of Continental nations, happened to be mainly in the right, while the English happened to be altogether in the wrong. As to accentuation—how it came I do not know—my countrymen were not a whit better than their southern neighbours. Both had, partly out of sheer carelessness, partly from some imagined metrical difficulties, convinced themselves that it was a rational and scholar-like practice

to hold as not written the real Greek accents, which were carefully printed on every word of every Greek book by a continuous tradition from the Alexandrian grammarians, and to adopt the Latin accentuation instead. My manifesto on the subject was sent forth with little hope of converting anybody from the error of such ways, but only as a basis of practical operations for myself, which it was impossible for any scholar to dispute. And so it turned out. Nobody disputed my doctrine, but few or none followed my practice.

His pamphlet on the pronunciation of Greek was widely read, and won the approval of the minority of scholars who were not insistent on the sanctity of academic habit. Amongst these was Professor Newman.

If Greek [he wrote] could come by talking, it would indeed be a gain. It will take fifty years at least to persuade the English of it, but every novelty must have a beginning.

The fifty years have nearly run their course, and the prediction is amply verified. During all that time Professor Blackie iterated and reiterated his charge against the teaching of the universities, with so slender a result that they may well be charged with an entire want of conviction of the worth of Greek.

Before the session began he and Mrs Blackie went to Ben Rhydding to try the water-cure established there. The visit was pleasant and

profitable, and under both headings may be placed the acquaintance with Miss Elizabeth Pease which it included, and which ripened into a lifelong friendship, favoured by the marriage some years later of Miss Pease to Professor Nichol, and her residence first in Glasgow, and afterwards for many years in Edinburgh.

During the first session of his new work Professor Blackie and his wife lived in lodgings in Princes Street; but they took a house in Castle Street in 1853, and made it their home for seven years. His inaugural lecture was printed and dispersed, and an extract from Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's response to a copy sent him will sufficiently indicate its tenor:—

I have now had leisure to read your pamphlet, in which I have felt great interest. The short paragraph you quote from the modern Greek newspaper is very curious, and leaves no doubt in my mind that the study of Romaic would not only vastly abridge the toil and time consumed now in learning the old Greek, but would also give us a more just and familiar comprehension of the right signification of classic words and phrases. The main distinction, to judge by so short an extract, so far as general style goes, is in the habitual construction of the sentences. The Romaic seems to avoid the inversions common to the old tongue, and in this respect to be similar to the transposition of Latin into Italian. Altogether, I think the pamphlet very valuable in its matter, and there is no doubt of its spirit and eloquence as to manner. If I

ever get a good three months' summer holiday, I am sufficiently convinced by your treatise to resolve to give myself up to Romaic. Greek can never be a dead tongue ; no people that once spoke it can give it up.

The lecture advanced the views which were already associated with the Professor's name. He had begun a translation of Homer some years before, while working for the Homeric Club in Aberdeen, and had already finished a rough recast of the 'Iliad.' The work required a closer personal acquaintance with Greece—its soil, climate, landscape, local conditions, and antiquities — than books could supply, and coupled with these needs was that of a fuller knowledge of the dialects of Greece in their modern forms. He wished to hear them spoken, and to learn their divergences from the language of Homer, upon their own ground. When the session ended he prepared to go to Greece. His equipment was simple enough,—a little store of new clothes, of classics, of Romaic ballads, supplemented by a few introductions, the most valuable of which were to Professor Rangabè and Dr George Finlay. A grey plaid and a broad white hat gave the finishing touches to his travelling costume, and on April 18 he embarked at Leith on the Hamburg steamer, and took train for Berlin on the day of its arrival.



A couple of days at Berlin, where he reviewed the haunts of his student days, from the very position to which they had inspired his aims, and a long, slow journey to Vienna, formed the unexciting prelude to further experiences. From Vienna he made his way, by diligence, through Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, to Trieste, re-covering the old ground which had led him to Italy twenty years earlier. At Trieste he embarked for Athens on a vessel which stopped at Corfu, Cephalonia, and Xante, using up a whole week in the cruise, so that more than a fortnight elapsed between his start from Leith and his finish on May 4 at Athens. But the voyage was fruitful of interesting impressions. On his arrival he presented the two letters already mentioned, and found Dr George Finlay and Professor Rangabè full of kindly attentions. Some passages from his first letter, despatched from Athens, will best express his state of mind in this adventure, at once so new and so checkered with familiar associations.

You will be happy to hear [he wrote to his wife] that I have got a most excellent lodging, clean, neat, healthy, and all that could be desired. The price is 140 drachms a-month, including victuals, the drachm being about 9 pence. The owner of the house expects you to take your victuals from him as part of his profit. I was most fortunate in being brought into an excellent house by Dr Finlay, my

learned countryman, who resides here, and who is extremely kind. It is situated on the upper part of the city, in a fine airy situation, quite close to the University, and not far from the palace of King Otho. I was amused when I found myself in University Street, as if the shop could never leave me, and with a large seminary for young ladies exactly opposite my south window! From this window also I have a view open to the pillared range of the Parthenon right in front; while on my right the hill is seen from the brow of which Xerxes, seated on a golden throne, looked out on the narrow firth of Salamis, crowded with the navy of the East; and to my left rises honeyed Hymettus. Behind the house there is a garden, which will soon be richly shaded with the quick-spreading foliage of the vines, and this garden looks out on the famous mountain Lycabettus, which overhangs Athens as Arthur's Seat does Edinburgh. It is an isolated conical hill of a very striking character. I mounted it this morning, and took about two hours to achieve the feat easily. Add to all this, that in my immediate neighbourhood are the streets of Hippocrates and Aristides, Sophocles and Euripides, and you may imagine that to a classical man no strange lodging could be more familiar. I am both at home here and not at home in a manner that considerably disturbs me, so that as yet I scarcely know where I am nor how to feel, and am habitually overpowered by a pleasant sort of discomfort which I should find it difficult to explain. But every new situation makes me feel uncomfortable at first, so I shall just sit quietly in the broad sun that shines here—I speak allegorically—and let the fruit which is now crude ripen in God's time. I am learning many things. What has delighted me most since entering this country, and what I am sure would chiefly delight you, is the natural and

strikingly dramatic character of the people and their mode of life. I have a hundred times fancied myself in the midst of some strange melodrama. The dresses of the people are so various and picturesque, the gait of the Greeks and Albanese has something in it so noble and kingly, the contour of their features is often so fine, the expression of the face now blithe and generous, grand and open—now dark, scowling, and savage,—the whole so lively, so easy, natural, and unconstrained, that to a person just slipt from the leading-strings of cold Edinburgh proprieties and etiquettes, the sensation of strange, rich naturalness was magical. Many of the men whom I see give a living idea of a Homeric Agamemnon or Ajax, while others again are like the murderers in "Macbeth" or "Richard," and a great deal more ferocious—cut-throat faces, and yet not without a certain rude grandeur of their own which our English town-bred murderers never have. I understood Mr King's Greek sermon to-day quite well, but I feel great difficulty in following any conversation. The old words are used in new ways. I can only persevere. I have found here my London correspondent Clyde—a light-haired, sunny-faced Scotsman—who is working hard at the modern Greek, and feels more and more persuaded every day that the system he and I are following is at once the easiest and the most direct to a thorough knowledge of the great language. He has been two months in lodgings, and is able to tell me many things that I would not otherwise have got hold of so soon.

As soon as he was settled Professor Blackie began to attend lectures at the University, and made daily some progress in understanding the modern Greek. But the great heat, which he

had not foreseen, and which affected his health, interfered with his study both of the language and the antiquities. His outfit had not been chosen in view of excessive heat, and he was obliged to reconstruct it, making purchases of white linen suits, and laying aside the accustomed plaid. As May wore to an end he began a series of excursions, to Argos, Corinth, and Nauplia, in which Mr Clyde was his companion. His courage in talking right and left with the people helped the Professor to make trial of his own repertory, which was rapidly increasing. By the end of May he was better used to the climate, and his life in Athens had rolled into a rut of habit which he described as follows :—

In the morning I generally take a walk of about two hours, surveying some part of the ground sacred to scholars. At nine I have breakfast—coffee, omelettes, bread and butter—sheep's butter! In the forenoon I study Greek and topography. At three I dine—soup, fish, roast, boiled, salad, oranges; and in the evening I walk out and enjoy the cool air, and visit some scene of classic interest. Before returning home I generally drop into a coffee-house, with which this place abounds, and taking a small cup of black coffee and a large tumbler of cold water, observe the public *idlesse* of the Greeks, and muse myself idly on nothing determinate.

Other letters are varied with accounts of dinners at the English and Prussian embassies,

and evening parties at the houses of Professors, Chaplains, and Missionaries.

Early in June he was invited to join Professor Kendrick, Mr Arnold, and Mr Chase in an excursion through Northern Greece, and he gladly accompanied them. They spent ten days in visiting Thermopylæ, Platæa, Archomenos, Thebes, Delphi, and the range of Parnassus. Their travels were made on horseback, and they took provisions with them to supplement the fare in out-of-the-way places. Some thirty miles was the average day's journey, and the Professor found it most fatiguing. "Such continual jolting and shaking, and such monotonous stretching of muscles by no means accustomed to tension, and such confinement of limbs fond of capricious liberty, became a real torture to my impatient spirit." But the mountain breeze of Delphi compensated for much after the heat of Athens. To ascend Parnassus, they exchanged their horses for mules, "the native trotters of the rock, and by the time the sun was passing slantingly through the dark pines, found ourselves in a green hollow on the verge of the snow region of the mountain." Here they found some shepherds at seesaw on a pole in front of a hut rank of its store of cheeses. This was a resting-place, and they dismounted to encamp for the night

round a fire outside the hut, at which they cooked their supper. The shepherds cut down branches of the spruce firs, and on the fragrant mattress which they strewed they slept all night under the dewless skies. He longed, as he had done a hundred times in Greece, for George Harvey's presence and recording pencil. Next morning, as they climbed the winding slope of the mountain, something of the afflatus which his Highland Bens were wont to breathe refreshed his spirit, and he broke forth into a descriptive song,—the only song he uttered in Greece.

On June 13 he returned to the hot confinement of Athens. Here he was vexed by a drought of rhyme. "My spiritual steam is low, and though I have several times attempted to write verses in this land so full of poetical temptations, I cannot succeed. I must content myself with the humbler occupations of amassing and arranging materials." A week of the capital now sufficed him, and he started at its end for Sunium and Marathon, returning by the back of Pentelicus. Then a short visit to the Rangabès at their summer home in Cephissia, on the slopes of Pentelicus,—where green fields and oliveyards and streams of water make an oasis in dusty Attica,—ended in a pleasant experience this pregnant time. For in spite of heat, of illness and discomfort, he had fulfilled

many of his desires, and had reaped and garnered seed to be sown in other soil, and to fructify to other uses; and he recorded 1853 as the most memorable year of his life.

He left by steamer about July 3, and was put ashore at Xante, where he spent some days with Mr Lindsay. These, however, were days of lassitude and illness, and were occupied in reading "Lalla Rookh" while stretched on a sofa. He left for Trieste in the steamer *Adria*, and took rail there for Vienna, whence he steamed up the Danube to Linz, travelled to Munich,—revisiting its Glyptothek for the sake of Greece,—and then sped on to Bonn, where he paid a fleeting visit to his friend Professor Brandes, and whence he hurried home.

I am coming home [he wrote from Vienna], God be praised, much enriched with new ideas and views and feelings in reference to Greek man and Greek nature that books could never have given me. A little living experience of this kind is worth libraries of learning, to me at least, who never had any great capacity for folios.

Amongst his gains was the frequently illustrated observation that the modern Greeks seek to preserve their language pure from foreign influence, and reject Italian, Roumanian, and Turkish words as equivalents for their own far descended and high-sounding epithets. Another gain was the

conviction that the translation of Homer which he had begun was unsatisfactory from lack of knowledge, and must be set aside for serious labour at the subject. This labour may be dated from the year which followed his visit to Greece.

During his absence his wife had stayed with old Mr Blackie in Gayfield Square. Her purpose in spending the summer in Edinburgh was the practical one of setting in order and furnishing with care, taste, and economy the house in Castle Street which they had chosen to be their home. Her sister, Miss Augusta Wyld, shared Mr Blackie's hospitality, and helped her in the many details of her undertaking. But they did not purpose to occupy the house immediately on the Professor's return, as some needed refreshing from hills and sea had been planned for August, and was carried out in Arran when he returned.

The Town Council had granted his application for an assistant lecturer, and he chose his old pupil and valued friend Mr James Donaldson, whose help, both initiatory and supplementary, served to relieve the pressure of mere school-mastering, and to give room for more purely professorial work. The two friends were of one mind with regard to the methods of teaching and of pronunciation, and in view of both they



studied Modern Greek together in the 'Songs of the Klephts,' the works of Professor Rangabè, and the newspapers which Dr Finlay sent periodically from Athens. Correspondence in the language with Athenian friends formed part of their practice, while Dr Finlay kept them in touch with the stir and rumour of unsettled Greece and its disappointing Othonian Government.

A passage in the "Notes" reviews this and subsequent epochs of his teaching, and may be quoted once for all, as it is tedious to recur to this subject in a biography of moderate length :—

The work of the Greek classes—while it lasted no more than five months at full tension—was sufficiently severe. Four hours a-day, and these continuous with only an hour's interval between the forenoon and afternoon. However, I was not the man to fret over the strain of the work; it was not the quantity but the quality of the work that in the least annoyed me. Of these four hours, two were devoted to the junior class, one to each of the senior classes. The best strength of the Professor's brain was consumed for two hours every day in doing work which was beneath the level of the rectorial teaching in the High School. The consequence of heaping such an amount of purely elementary work on his head was to prevent his doing what his best ambition prompted him to do for his more advanced classes. I at length got the University Commission to appoint a tutor to the junior classes of Greek, Latin, and Mathematics. This adoption

of the tutorial system into the Scottish Universities was a most important step in advance. With regard to the special conduct of the class, I confined my activity with the junior class altogether to reading and writing, and the training of the ear by familiar dialogues. To my second class I gave a lecture only once a-week, and to my highest class only twice a-week; and my whole experience as a teacher has convinced me more and more of the wisdom of the Socratic method, by which the function of the teacher is confined as much as possible to teaching the pupil to teach himself. I therefore adopted the habit of starting problems, and ordering papers for their solution, which were afterwards publicly discussed. Formal essays on large subjects I did not prescribe, partly because it was apparent that even the most advanced of my pupils would be more advantageously employed in reading Greek than in writing English, partly because there was large opportunity for writing essays in other classes. For essays I substituted special subjects of study, with special examinations and special distinctions, a procedure which secured all the substantial good of the essay without any of the evil. To kindle if possible some spark of noble enterprise in the new field of Comparative Philology, I gave a special prize every year for studies in the science of languages, the competition for which always produced some half-dozen of very creditable papers. But the greatest and most notable reform which I introduced was the change that, through my agency, assisted by the regulations of the University Commissioners above mentioned, took place in the third or advanced class. This class is one which the Professor is in no wise bound to teach, but is undertaken for the profit and honour of the University. When I commenced teaching, it numbered thirty-nine students. When my system began to

produce its full fruits, I was left with only a dozen. Was this a sign of advance? Certainly, and one of the surest. By the elevation which had taken place in the platform of the first two classes, the second class performed for many the functions that had previously been performed by the third. Besides, by the new regulations, for the best type of students only one year's Greek was now required; and for this type, as the first class was too low, the third was too high: so the highest Greek came to be deserted more and more, and towards the end of the session I was sometimes left with only half-a-dozen of students. All this was quite right. I was not long of observing that the third class was not even attended by the best students, but by some who wished in a cheap way to supplement the deficiencies of previous years. So I pitched it up by a bold stroke far above the reach of those fellows, and secured at last a select few to follow me in philosophy, poetry, and philology as far as it might be possible for me to fly, or convenient for them to follow.

The University Commission alluded to in this extract from the "Notes" was that of 1858, which was more due to the demand for reform excited by Professor Blackie's letters, pamphlets, and lectures, than to any other cause. Its main achievement was to substitute a three years' for a four years' course, and so to throw a heavier responsibility upon the secondary schools. It set the ball rolling, sanctioning discontent with the prevailing deadlock in education, and conducting it through sixteen years of legitimate agitation

to the Commission of Inquiry which began its work in 1875, and resulted in the Executive Commission of 1890, whose work will call for attention in a future chapter.

In close connection with the Professor's conduct of the Greek class is the opinion, or rather variety of opinions, as to his success in teaching. It seems to be conceded by all students who were really in earnest to learn as much Greek as could be learnt in the contracted sessions of our Universities, that Professor Blackie was a vivid, inspiring, and most helpful teacher; that he grudged no trouble in the class-room, or out of it, to help those who wished to help themselves; that he encouraged such by gifts not only of books but of his leisure; and that more particularly those who were at once diligent and poor found him ready to supplement in the evening and at his own house the instruction of the morning with explanation, with reading, with the use of references, with the loan of books to which they could otherwise have had no access, with the sight of rare illustrations, and above all with the frank and hearty respect which their industry inspired in him, which led him often to express admiration for many a modest and unpretending student in whom the scholarly element, backed by perseverance and undaunted by poverty, grew

and developed in his favouring regard. These men fill the desks in Scottish church and school, and are to be found cherishing their old Professor's memory with love and gratitude in many a manse at home and abroad, on African veldt and in Canadian farm, on ranch and sheep-run, wherever Scotchmen penetrate and do their country credit. The opinion of such students as, from lack of intelligence, preferred to make the class-room a bear-garden is without importance. Their genial teacher, indulgent to the young by reason of his own unending youth, of his own sympathy with the freakishness of youth, was perhaps too little versed in pedagogic expedients for class government. Frowns and majesty, the dictatorial brow, the sarcasm edged so keenly that it can even flay the mental epidermis of a rowdy student, were no part of his congenital equipment, and his adoption of their artillery failed at times. But we have ample testimony to his many-sided fitness for work, to his unwearied application of every method which could appeal to the curiosity, to the interest, to the intelligence of his class, which could rouse its members from the half-paralysed stupor into which the teaching of languages is apt to plunge the learner. For many years he worked not merely on the respectable level of the customary professor, but far beyond and above

it, making flights and excursions of the most stimulating character, practising the innovations which are now becoming the commonplaces of reformed teaching, and never stinting the personal labour which might replenish, enrich, and enliven the supply which he controlled.

In the later years of his professoriate it was to some extent noticeable that he had wearied a little of the constant draughts upon his invention and endurance; that his interest was diverted to so many questions of general importance that he overflowed with these at times into devious prologues to Xenophon or Thucydides; and that he became, as men of original incentive are apt to become, somewhat too independent of the conditions imposed by the class-room and the class hours. But many men whose experience of his teaching belongs to this later period are prepared to testify that, notwithstanding his discursiveness, he set them on the right road to discover Greek for themselves, and taught them to take delight in the treasures which it at once stores and distributes.

In the spring of 1854 we find him again lecturing to the members of the Philosophical Institution, and calling down upon himself the natural ire of a Catholic priest amongst their number by an erratic excursion into polemics when treat-

ing of the æsthetical character of the medieval Church.

The æsthetics of church architecture engaged his leisure interest this year, and we find him in September making a tour of cathedrals—Durham, Lincoln, Peterborough, Winchester, Salisbury, and Ely. This was interrupted by a few weeks at Moor Park under Dr Lane's care—walking, driving, and rhyming on fine days, dancing jigs in the dining-room and posting up his correspondence when it rained. He enjoyed every hour of his stay, and entreated his wife by every post to join him, but in vain. Mrs Blackie preferred to spend quiet days in summer amongst the friends whom she already knew, to sharing his enterprise amongst strangers. So he cut short the weeks in Surrey, and took up the clue of his cathedral tour, and towards the end of October they forgathered and returned to Edinburgh.

During these summer wanderings the habit of mornings devoted to work was never intermitted. Homer and a goodly pile of Homeric commentators accompanied him this year wherever he went, and we learn that at Moor Park he finished his translation of the first six books of the 'Iliad.'

In Edinburgh his time was amply occupied. Professor Bernays asked him towards the end of the year to take up the subject of old Latin and

Greek Inscriptions—Hermeneutics being a branch of archæology concerning which Germany was both urgent and successful. He answered on the first day of 1855 :—

I find so much to do in rich clover-fields that I cannot be induced to set out on an exploring expedition among cold barren crags for the sake of half-a-dozen saxifrages and other rare flowers, nourished in those frozen regions by snow-water. I have made a vow to keep to one kind of work, and that for which I am plainly cut out by nature. I do not cherish the most distant expectation of becoming an archæologist. I am at my old trade of rhyming again in various shapes—among others, translating Homer's 'Iliad' into English ballad measure. This is my business in the summer months. In winter my strength is so frittered away with teaching—the greater part being of the most elementary character—that I am not able to attempt anything that may in any sense be styled production.

In the summers of 1855 and 1856 he and Mrs Blackie made their headquarters again at Bonn, while he prosecuted his inquiries into German systems of education as far afield as Halle and Berlin.

A letter to the Provost and Town Council of Edinburgh embodied the obvious conclusions which resulted from renewed comparison of the system in Germany with that at home, and the winter of the second year found him putting these conclusions in the van of controversial onset by address-



ing them to the editor of the 'Times.' The subject had now become familiar, by means of newspapers and pamphlets, to the public concerned, and he met with vigorous co-operation from many sources. His own colleagues in Edinburgh University were at last with him, but for the one exception, his opponent from first to last. He had attained to this important stage, that the academic corporation to which he belonged admitted and cautiously advocated a measure of reform. But his scheme for reform after the German pattern was not so heartily endorsed, nor was he unduly obstinate on that point. Indeed, when the whole matter came to its practical stage, he forbore both influence and interference. His share was, as Dr Guthrie phrased it, "to wake up the country with his trumpet."

The social life interlinked with these activities was rich and varied. Old friendship drew him always closer to George Harvey and Dr John Brown. Sydney Dobell was often in Edinburgh, and sought his cheerful society. Dr George Finlay appeared in the Modern Athens from time to time, laden with the woes of its old and eponymous metropolis. Thus he announced his arrival in the summer of 1857 :—

I am still so confused in my head with the heat of Athens, the dust raised by the change of Ministry, the

army of occupation, the sweeping of the palace, and our old friend Boreas, that I cannot recollect anything to say to you except that you were never forgotten at the headquarters of marble monuments and marble dust. I hope to be in Edinburgh soon. I remained a week in London talking politics and art, and mixing them up in utter desperation of conveying a meaning to people who, having seen Constantinople, know everything!

Dr John Carlyle was a frequent visitor; with Dr Guthrie and Dean Ramsay he had established the friendliest relations. If he had just lost Sir William Hamilton, the honoured friend of many years, he had gained his philosophic successor, Professor Campbell Fraser, who to a deep and stable concern with ideas added a gentle humour, which played upon the shadowy realities of existence as sunlight plays upon vapour.

Edinburgh was wealthy in possessing, magnetic in attracting, genial souls, and the "light of other days" still sparkled in their intercourse. The Professor had chosen Dr Guthrie to be his pastor in ordinary, and sat Sunday after Sunday in a corner of the big square pew sacred to the elders and to distinguished worshippers—just under the pulpit, where the tall Doctor spake rousing words that moved and swayed the crowd beneath him. For his eloquence,—full of emotion, of simile, of elevation, of conviction, vibrating with love of nature and of man,—Professor

Blackie chose him, and because his large sympathy refused all channels dug by sect, and flowed out into the broad stream whose waters God has designed for the refreshing of all mankind. The plaid, the thick stick, the low-crowned hat, the brown wig worn for some years, the finely cut profile, the devout attitude in prayer, the close attention, were all familiar to the congregation of Free St John's during the latter half of Dr Guthrie's ministry.

Connected also with these years was the "Blackie Brotherhood," instituted by the Professor to bring together, at least once in twelve months, a little group of friends belonging to the inner circle. We find twelve of these upon its first roll-call: Mr Hunter of Craigcrook and his son, Mr Kinnear, Dr Lindsay Alexander, Dr Hanna, Dr Walter C. Smith, Professor Campbell Fraser, Dr John Brown, Mr George Harvey, Mr Noël Paton, Mr D. O. Hill, and Dr Gairdner. Parts in some kind were important to brotherhood, but the essential qualification was moral nobility of character. Poets, painters, philosophers, and divines were only qualified if to their gifts they added the Christian graces of faith, hope, and charity. Atheists and scoffers were classed with bigots and dogmatists, and with the "damnatory orthodox," in disability. Such men

are never poets, nor sing the lyrics of love, nature, and good-fellowship, and they would have been out of place in that kindly company, which had a preference for "moral nobility" tempered by song. Their communion, bodily and prandially, was in one of the Princes Street hotels; spiritually, "in that genial region of fervid and flowery spontaneity in which, as in an earthly Paradise, it was the privilege of the Brotherhood to dwell." The "Blackie Brotherhood" lasted for a quarter of a century, and the gaps which death made in its ranks were filled by men with every worthy attribute. It is impossible now to recover its merry jests and sparkling humour. The "snows of yester-year" endure a winter long; its laughter is but a waft of fragrance which no man can register.

## CHAPTER XIII.

LAYS, LECTURES, AND LYRICS.

1857-1860.

THE minstrel flame, which had nearly flickered out in Athens,—fanned by airs from the western seas at Arran, by pine-scented breezes at Braemar,—blazed up again, and at the end of 1856 he completed a volume of original verse, called ‘Lays and Legends of Ancient Greece,’ and published by Messrs Blackwood & Sons. Although mainly concerned with the mythical and heroic stories of Greece, there were appended to these the “Braemar Ballads,” inspired by a summer sojourn there. Marching alone down the glens and up the mountains, his faculties quickened by movement in the fresh and heather-sweetened air, he covered much ground in his wanderings. As he walked he sang and shouted his lays into

shape, aided rather than diverted by the shifting scenes of nature in her solitudes, or of peasant life and industry. For the first time he was brought face to face with deserted homesteads, with ruined hamlets, with patches—once kindly and provident—merging into the surrounding waste, with the wilding bushes from which the vanished hands had gathered fruits in their season, with all those relics of humble life which touch us with a pathos far nearer tears than do the crumbling towers of feudalism. They filled him with sympathy, and sent him straight to the study of that struggle, age after age, between peasant and proprietor. With characteristic energy he mastered its annals in the past, and made acquaintance with that old agrarian feud which separated into hostile camps the Plebeians and Patricians of Rome. His thoughts were soon articulate both in verse and prose. The "Braemar Ballads" were added to the Greek Lays, and a letter was sent to the 'Times,' which was not only inserted in the columns of that influential journal, but endorsed and made conspicuous by a sympathetic leading article. Professor Blackie awoke to find himself the centre of a storm of letters more or less hostile from all parts of the kingdom. He bore the onset blithely as was his wont, and settled himself all the more firmly into

his attitude of challenge. No war-horse ever welcomed the battle with a readier response.

As a poetic venture the 'Lays and Legends of Ancient Greece' were much criticised, and although they pleased the taste of those who liked their poetry fervid, it was not surprising that the finer critics of the time found fault with their torrent of troubled verbiage. For, in spite of their fervour, they are deficient in interest, rude in construction, and suggest the schoolboy in expression. Their poet was not wholly a poet. He solaced himself with rhyme, but did not possess the great poetic gift which transmutes the very words of common life into gems that gleam and glow, by some subtle setting, by some immersion into fire which releases the pure gold from the dross. His genius selected on ethical, not on æsthetical, grounds. Whatsoever things were noble, manly, heroic, patriotic, devout—on these things he rhymed, and was a poet more by such selection than by rendering. When he told a straightforward story in simple words he approached poetic utterance, and the incident of the reveller Polemo convinced of righteousness by Xenocrates is almost on the plane of poetry. But a wayward use of language depreciates even this; for to apply in verse the same loose copiousness which makes unconsidered talk so worthless is to deform its structure and to paralyse its aim.

From this extravagance he was seldom able to refrain, so that just as seldom did he reach the level of strong and simple diction, commensurate with the thought, unvexed by bluster and unconfused by ineptitude.

After a visit to Oxford in June 1857, he and Mrs Blackie went to Bonn. They secured pleasant rooms which looked down on the Rhine, and reverted to the amenities of summer life in Germany with enjoyment. He made a short flight to Berlin to see his old friend and instructor Professor Gerhard, and described various new social experiences in a letter to Bonn.

I have been introduced to a vast array of notables. I took tea at Gerhard's one night with the three brothers Grimm, of whom Jacob is the most famous—a fine, quiet, intelligent old man with white hair, and with a certain plain rusticity of manner and homeliness of accent that agree admirably with the simple and honest tone of his mind. I have seen Lepsius, the great Egyptian scholar, an active, young-looking man not above forty; Boeckh, the patriarch of German Hellenists; Ritter the geographer, Ranke the historian, and many more. I have visited two of the principal gymnasia, and made acquaintance with the schoolmasters, or Professors as they are, and in respect of learning well deserve to be, called.

From Professor Gerhard he learned that his old Roman friend the Lutheran chaplain was settled near Halle, and he diverged from the direct route back to Bonn that he might spend



a day with him. A halt at Eisenach and a short journey afterwards brought him to the valley of the Lahn, down which he walked, visiting Marburg on the way, and finding a steamer at Coblenz for Bonn.

Naturally the following winter witnessed a crop of letters and lectures on educational reform which had germinated at Berlin and Bonn. But early in 1858 appeared as well his book 'On Beauty,' published by Messrs Sutherland & Knox, and fulfilling the expectation which his treatment of the subject many years before, in the popular lecture given in Aberdeen, had roused amongst both friends and students. He took refuge in this book from the drudgery of his Homeric treatises and translation, these involving him in so vast a study of ponderous authorities as to occasion periods of sheer fatigue, which he turned to matters more disposable. He dedicated the volume to his old friends George Harvey, Robert Horn, and Dr John Brown, "in memory of pure pleasures and happy hours." A few sentences from the "beloved physician's" letter of thanks express the general appreciation amongst his friends:—

I am vain enough to feel very happy in having my name upon it, along with our other true friends. You said when I last saw you that this volume would not sell so well as

the Poems: if it does not it is the public's own blame, but I will not believe it for two years to come. If I mistake not, there is more in the honest instincts, the broad sympathy, the genuine philosophy and cordial love of all that is lovable as expressed in these Discourses, to take and to hold, and to impress the great mass of thinking men and women, than in all else that our century has yet seen, not excepting my own great Ruskin. Many thanks for the book and the dedication, and for all the pleasure it has been to me to know and to love you. Ever affectionately,

J. BROWN.

If we take toll enough from this verdict to exclude its personal enthusiasm, we have still left an opinion from a very candid critic, which was echoed by many an authority on the subject. And if we turn to the book itself, we are astonished to find that the Professor's and not the Doctor's practical estimate proved to be correct.

Three lectures on Beauty, supplemented by an essay on "Plato's Doctrine of the Beautiful," form its contents. Its germ was his indignation against the views held by the old Earl of Aberdeen and by Lord Jeffrey and the Rev. Archibald Alison, according to whom there is no such thing as beauty pure and simple, our ideas having become crystallised into a doctrine of the beautiful from hereditary association. The Professor here inveighed against this opinion as a "Caledonian revival of old Attic sophistry." The lecture in Aberdeen had protested against

this dreary heresy, but at that time his hold of the subject was not fully instructed. Since then his advanced class-work had called for a careful study of Platonic æsthetics, for which he not only revived his old cogitations, but made research into every expression of the beautiful in nature and in art. His cathedral tours, his reading, his travels on foot, his own intuitions educated into convictions, had conspired to inform and ripen the opinion to which he had spontaneously given utterance in the lecture.

For the sake of his students he connected with the study of Plato three lectures upon the doctrine of the beautiful, and these academical discourses, verified and revised, formed the bulk of his book 'On Beauty.' The vigour, purity, and lucidity of its style emphasise the care with which he used his notable gift of prose writing, as compared with the recklessness of his verse. His own estimate ranks it as "one of the most original books that I have written, as it was entirely thought out of my own head, and had in its genesis and growth nothing at all to do with that Platonism which I added to it as a sort of appendix."

About the middle of January 1858 he was in Glasgow, rousing the apathy of its merchant citizens on the question of schools and univer-

sities by a lecture in the Educational Institute—a lecture which received the justice of full report in the 'Herald,' instead of the usual unintelligent paragraph, which so often misrepresented in the newspapers the aim of his public utterances by reporting only their freakish interpolations. This lecture carried weight in the western capital, arousing interest and conquering local prejudice.

The spring and early summer were spent in England; Mrs Blackie accompanied her husband to London and shared his experiences. These included meetings with the Carlyles, with Leigh Hunt, Charles Kingsley, Dr Trench, and the Ernest Bunsens. Towards the end of May the Professor went to Cambridge, where he found the dons somewhat agitated by the approaching advent of the Royal Commission on University Reform, whose operations threatened to be drastic. "The reform will scarcely be so sweeping as they require," was his comment; "in this country all reforms generally get the fangs pulled out and the claws pared very carefully." His host was Professor Thompson at Trinity, but he called on

the famous Whewell, and was received with great politeness. I am to dine in hall as his guest to-day. He is a grand-looking man—tall, and yet admirably propor-

tioned. He is one of the most vigorous and firmly knit men in England; drinks a bottle of port every day. He is a portentous encyclopædist, and is said to know everything under the sun even better than those who know it best. Quite a different man is Thompson—a modest confessor of ignorance when he does not know, but thoroughly and accurately real when he does know. He is certainly liberal in theological matters—which indeed seems to be the general undertone here. They seem to prefer keeping certain delicate matters atmospherized in a convenient mist. As things go at present, one can scarcely blame them. But there will come a volcanic outburst some day that will blow all their mists away in a style both grim and ludicrous, I fancy.

From Cambridge he walked to Huntingdon, “to pay worship at the shrine of Oliver Cromwell,” and rejoined his wife in London early in June. Their stay was prolonged to the end of July, and he suffered from the heat of crowded halls and houses, so that on their return to Scotland they resorted to Moffat for recovery. Here hills and glens and Covenanting memories restored him, and he busied himself with an article on Bunsen—now made Baron and Freiherr von Bunsen, and living in retirement at a villa on the banks of the Neckar, opposite the castle of Heidelberg, where he used his leisure to issue a corrected text of the Bible, enriched with copious notes—an evening time of light after a day of faithful toil.

The Hellenic Society attacked the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus during the winter, and amongst new members enrolled were Mr Noël Paton and the Rev. William Pulsford, pastor of an Independent chapel in Edinburgh, whose courage and spirituality were leading a little congregation of faithful souls to new discoveries in the Christian life.

But the records of this winter are scanty. A growing acquaintance with Mr Robert Chambers and his family is conspicuous amongst them. One of the publisher's daughters, Janet Chambers, was a frequent visitor, and won the liveliest affection from both Professor and Mrs Blackie. Her memory has grown dim in the city, where once she reigned over the hearts of her friends. Aspiring after all things lovely and of good report, she taught in its slums the gospel of cleanliness, and achieved with the sweet influences of her smiles, her ardour, and her understanding, a success of initiative, now grown into organised endeavour, although the heirs of her labours have all but forgotten her name. A generation ago she died, and the radiance of her face, and her soul uplifted to God, passed into His presence.

Another friend had become important to the Blackies, Miss Frances Stoddart, the angler-poet's

eldest sister, a woman of rare accomplishment, and of still rarer modesty, and for the few years which remained of her life the frequent partner of their summer travels. These two shared the plans made for June and July in 1859.

The four friends went to Ambleside for the first, and three of them to Grange in Borrowdale for the second, month. There Miss Chambers stayed till July 21, and inspired no fewer than four of the lyrics with which the Professor busied himself during the summer months. One of these followed her the day after she left. It is called "Janet" in the 'Lyrical Poems,' and drew from her the acknowledgment :—

It is very lovely, but too much for me ; it makes me sad and humble. Thank you for the undeserved sentiments expressed in the poem ; thank you for everything.

During their stay in Ambleside, amongst many new acquaintances, they met Miss Martineau, and spent an evening with her. She had reached a stage of increasing ill-health, however, and they saw her only once. They were busied with Robertson of Brighton's sermons, and had for engrossing interest Garibaldi and his golden ventures. Sydney Dobell wrote to the Professor in June :—

Can you think of Garibaldi's corps without a sympathy that is almost compassion ? They stir me to the depths

with that kind of unspeakable pity with which one looks upon more than mortal happiness. Think of those young thousands,—many enough for hope, few enough for glory,—confident toward God and man in a cause utterly noble, lifted by that confidence into unknown powers and a brotherhood almost religious in the equality of hero with hero, marching—June underfoot and overhead—through the ringing of falling chains and the light of a people's eyes, while the fondest and loveliest of the land are waiting to reward them if they live, or nurse them if they fall, and mothers bless and children pray, and old men envy, and Italy in the stature of her new freedom—at every step more imperial as she goes—leads them from victory to victory across the intoxicating summer of this Present to the hazy golden Future of a boyish patriot's dream. What kind of climax will be possible on this earth to men who have begun life's drama with such a first act?

Several letters from Dr George Finlay show the constancy of the Professor's correspondence with his friend in Athens, and their tenor tells us how fully they entered into each other's interests. Thus one received at Ambleside starts with an entertaining parable:—

Lollianos is the name I have given to a well-preserved bust which now adorns the end of the corridor in my house. Lollianos was professor and Strategos, then the high office in the municipality of Athens. During his mayoralty he did everything in his power to alleviate the suffering caused by a famine. But before the corn arrived the Athenians began to stone him. Pancratias, the Cynic, saved him by asking the enraged populace,



“Whether they did not know when they elected Lollianos that his trade was to make phrases and not bread?” I quote this from Greece under the Romans, to warn you that you may starve with university reform unless you continue to waste your time on the little boys.

In August the Blackies returned to Edinburgh, and the Professor plunged once more into the depths of Homeric research and translation. He sought opinions from Mr Theodore Martin, Mr Campbell Shairp, and other critical friends as to the quality of his lines.

I was much interested [wrote Mr Shairp from St Andrews] in what you read me of your Homer. Don't spare the linial labour, for if it is to succeed it must have the trick of sound to catch the vulgar rather than the learned ear. The only thing I fear is whether the ballad couplet will not become monotonous when prolonged through 24 books. I almost despair of any metre of ours answering to Homer's hexameter.

About the middle of September the British Association met at Aberdeen under Prince Albert's presidency, and the Professor was invited by his old friend Mr Forbes White to attend its meetings from the hospitable shelter of his home in Bon Accord Square. Miss Chambers travelled north with him, and his record of the journey is worth quoting:—

Such a monster train, with 900 people in one huge winding line! We had in our carriage a trump-card of a

fellow, the Rev. Norman Macleod of Glasgow, who kept us in a roar of laughter with a succession of the most admirable jokes and humorous stories. The very look of the man is a joy, so round, so full, so jovial, so clear, bright, healthy, and hilarious! I was quite prepared to fall in love with him by what I had previously known, and now fell right into his arms at once. What a good and pleasant thing is a jovial man, how transcendently good is a jovial *priest*! Jenny was tired with her previous day's work, but could not help brightening up under the radiant influence of the lively theologer; she got upon her sanitary hobby-horse, and made various sage remarks, dear lassie! We found here Scott, Edersheim, Dr Cairns of Berwick, with Professor and Mrs Geddes, and the three Miss Johnstones.

On September 17 he wrote:—

The address of the Prince was full of sound sense, philosophy, and tact. Germany has always ideas. He looked very bland and benign, and gave me a special nod as he walked out from the Geological Section on Thursday. You must understand that in order to secure to myself some real benefit I at once determined to attend regularly only one section, and various reasons combined to make me choose the Geological Section. I have now attended three days for four hours each, and have heard much good matter, and begin to feel myself at home in the present state of the most important discoveries. The Old Red Sandstone, as usual, plays a great figure in the debates. It is most edifying to me to contemplate the variety of character exhibited by the speakers. Our friend Ramsay is a direct, cheerful, distinct fellow, never long-winded, and always to the point. Sir R. Murchison has the decision of an old soldier, and is quite erect, not at all

grey, though he has been hammering rocks all over the world for thirty-five years since he left the army. The most massive brain and finely chiselled scientific face is Sir Charles Lyell's; and almost all of the leading men have a vigour and directness about their style of speaking that seems to be borrowed from the clear blow of the hammer which they practise on the rocks.

On September 20 he continued :—

I am still in a vortex. Last night we had a dinner of the "Red Lions," a club founded by Forbes, Bennett, Huxley, and a few other notables in the scientific world. Owen, the zoologist, was in the chair—a grand, tall, broad, truly leonine man, combining dignity with good-humour, which is not easy. I sang two songs and smoked two cigars, and made myself agreeable considerably to the gratification of the old Adam, who also in one sense has his rights. James Martineau has been living up at Braemar for two months, and preached last Sunday forenoon in this place. Of course I did not miss the opportunity of seeing what small account the Holy Spirit takes of our petty orthodoxies and heterodoxies, and verily I was rewarded! Such a sermon, so commanding, so comprehensive, so profound, so original, and as a whole so effective, I have seldom heard. It was directed to the men of science especially, showing how the idea of a mere God of natural laws is insufficient to satisfy the cry of the human heart.

Before returning to Edinburgh the Professor made a short excursion to Elgin to see some sandstone beds from which crocodiles had been unearthed where fishes were expected.

Messrs Sutherland & Knox issued the 'Lyrical Poems' in December. They formed a collection to which many years had made contribution, and he took warrant for their publication from Goethe's example :—

“What stood in time and space asunder,  
Each born in its appointed land,  
Are gathered now, one cover under,  
And placed in one kind reader's hand.”

The volume was dedicated to Dr Guthrie, its first poems being memories of Scottish Covenanters, of whom the Doctor wrote :—

You have done justice, grandly done, to a body of men of genuine piety, and true, enlightened, and staunch patriotism. I would like to read the pieces sacred to the memory of our martyrs with a thousand or two of leal Scotch men and women for my hearers,—how one could move and melt and fire them!

A volley of reviews for and against the poems but little disturbed his equanimity. They need not be recalled, but worthy of quotation are some of the letters, which either acknowledged the cheerful spirit of his book or criticised its style. The most interesting of these may be given in full. The date is January 7, 1860 :—

MY DEAR SIR,—For the last few days I have been interesting myself in the Poems you have been so good as to send me, and the sense they have given me of our agreement in many points of opinion and feeling has

heightened the value which your words of sympathy already had for me when I first read them on New Year's morning. That generous prompting which made you write the words will make you glad to know that they were like a draught of courage and strength to me. It is *not* so with all praise, but only with that which shows that one's intention has been thoroughly understood; and your praise is of this kind. Without such encouragement now and then, it would be a much harder task to keep oneself clear of the petty influences that come from the echoes of journalistic and club life—nay, even from the reflection that popular success is hardly a test until the second generation.

To have helped me in this way will, I know, be a satisfaction to the writer of that golden "Advice to a favourite Student," and it will not less be a remembered ground of deep obligation by  
THE AUTHOR OF 'ADAM BEDE.'

A few lines from Dr Whewell's letter of January 9 emit a gleam of pedantry:—

I much like the "Hymn to Helios." It has many very good hexameters, and would have had more if you had written it with a full belief in your English Hexameter. The verse is, when well written, quite as perfect as any other English verse; and it is only the mistakes of pedants which have prevented the English public from seeing this. The reasons why I think that you have in this case written it carelessly are such as these: you have many, far too many, spondaic verses, which should be avoided, and may surely be avoided in general; and you have one verse with a dactyl at the end—Theology—a shocking barbarism. Excuse my criticisms—*ed io anche*—I too am a hexametrist—and believe me, yours very truly,  
W. WHEWELL.

The Poems are loosely parcelled together into five books, labelled classically, with regard, not always obvious, to their contents. Book I. places eleven poems on the Covenanters under the protection of *Clio*; amongst them is the spirited song of "Jenny Geddes" already mentioned. Book II., with *Polyhymnia* as the guardian Muse, contains "Advice to a favourite Student," "The Sabbath-day," "Moments," and "Trust in God," which, from a varied assortment, rise into distinction, although more because their spirit aspires than because their form attains. *Erato* presides over a number of love-songs, whose Doras and Fannys and Janets are vigorously courted in strains too rollicking to be dangerous. *Euterpe* takes charge of a sturdy squad, whose sentiments are robust, but scarcely poetical, and amongst which "The Working Man's Song" is neither good nor true nor beautiful. No sensible working man understands the term "gentleman" in so false and froward a sense. Book V. celebrates, under the title *Camena*, certain hymns, songs, elegies, and epigrams in Latin.

It seems to have been in this year that Professor Blackie was first introduced to Mr Gladstone. The meeting took place in Dr Guthrie's vestry at the close of a Sunday afternoon's service; but the acquaintance was con-

firmed, at the Chancellor of the Exchequer's own desire, by a conversation over breakfast on the following Tuesday morning, when Dean Ramsay was host, and when the subject of interest common to both was Homer.

In March he was in correspondence with Professor Ritschl of Bonn, for whom he was able to secure three volumes of Sir Walter Scott's works missing from the University library there. By the end of the session he was worn out with fatigue, and went to Moor Park for rest. He wrote on arrival: "The journey was stupid, no smallest lispings of the Muse to fill the dull vacancy." Dr Lane was on the eve of removing his establishment to Sudbrooke Park, and there his patient paid him a second visit in July, after a stay of some weeks in London. A letter to Mrs Blackie gives some interesting details of his doings at Richmond:—

I rambled about the Park all yesterday forenoon with Darwin on the *Origin of Species* in my hand, meditating to get at the source of the unhappy divorce between science and religion which everywhere meets one nowadays, and which, I begin to suspect, is, as in so many other cases, to be looked on as a reaction against the one-sidedness of the orthodox view of creation as a thing done once for all by a magical fiat, after which the Creator retires from the scene. But I need not theologise with you.

Yesterday I dined with Lord Russell, *alias* "Finality John," at 2.30 o'clock, in a very delightful and easy style. He has a gift of Pembroke Lodge, on the ridge of the high ground just above our meadows, from the Queen, and lives there in elegant cottage style; for the place, though full of beauty, is quite small and unpretending. It commands from every point the most magnificent views of English greenery. We dined in a little room painted with trellis and green leaves, with open window, and looking out, or rather walking out, into the rich grass and trees amid which the house lies embosomed. The new Earl is a little smiling mannie. The son (Lord Amberley) you know. He was very attentive to me, and seems to have some wise thoughts in his noddle. I owe two things to him not at all to be despised. He taught me a new game called croquet, and he gave me the new sensation of playing at a game on Sunday, doing what to our Scottish conscience should appear a sin. The dinner was quite quiet, not above eight or ten altogether—and a few visitors popped in afterwards. After dinner we walked into the other room and out into the garden, and then made up a small knot round a table in the open air and took tea about half-past five. Among the party was Lord Dufferin, a tall, lithe, smiling, dexterous, agreeable, and gentlemanly fellow. We had also the Italian and French Ambassadors, with whom Lord John walked up and down among the trees.

I must off on Thursday morning and direct for the Isle of Wight.

There are indications of an intended visit to Alfred Tennyson, hindered by the poet's absence from home.



He was in Edinburgh at the end of September, and was in correspondence with Sir Roderick Murchison about the geology of Greece and the contiguous northern land.

In the inaugural lecture of the next session we find him leaping the academical fence and foisting in the subject of the Highland clearances, a proof that it lay close to his mind. The lecture, on its proper ground, was occupied with modern Greek, its heredity, its corruption by Albanian, Italian, and Turkish, and its effort in literature to revert to the purity of the mother language.

The closing week of November brought the sad news of Baron Bunsen's death, after an illness which lasted for several months and involved much suffering. He died without finishing his People's Bible, but no man ever left behind him the memory of a more fully perfected life, lived in the constant sense of the Divine presence, in untiring love of men, in reverent fulfilment of all duty.

It is impossible to give a detailed account of all Professor Blackie's activities during these years. His life had become a full and tranquil stream, of whose chief currents record may be maintained, whose depth and breadth can be indicated, but not minutely gauged and stated. During his absence in the summer of 1860 his wife had taken

charge of "flitting" their belongings from Castle Street to 24 Hill Street, his Edinburgh home till 1882. The house suited him for many reasons, its main advantage being the quiet of a narrow street undisturbed by traffic. The close neighbourhood of Professor and Mrs Lorimer and of the Sterlings commended the removal to Mrs Blackie, whose touch converted the dull house into a home of rare beauty and fitness. Old friends must still remember the charm with which she endowed her dwelling, each appointment seeming born in its proper place, and the whole giving an impression of harmony, variety, and comfort almost unique in those days of degenerate upholstery.

The dining-room was walled with books, for a large sum was yearly spent upon their acquisition, and they overflowed into corridors and bedrooms. This room served a double use, and was study as well as dining-room. It opened into Mrs Blackie's domain, whose walls were panelled in ivory and gold, with Greek mottoes for its cornice, and with dark crimson hangings and couches—a long, low room, full of associations to all who knew it and its treasures. Its magnet was the hostess, whose gifts were in no way second to her husband's, but on whom the blight of self-distrust, of a modesty which underrated all that she did, had settled from her youth upwards. It

was perhaps indwelling, but it had been fostered in childhood by the severity of Calvinistic influences. The friends who have survived can well remember her intuition, her responsive sympathy, her originality, her gift in language, her capacity for quick and sure apprehension of all she read, with unhesitating appreciation or swift condemnation of matter, manner, or both, her singular attractiveness compounded of all these things, and of a certain personal spell woven by eyes and voice and rapid movements, and which was emphasised by the full and flowing folds of her dress, silken or velvet or woollen. She followed fashion enough to pacify opinion, but stopped short of restraint and deformity.

The first years of their stay in this new home were signalised by an upheaval of hospitable inclinations on the part of the Professor. The spare rooms were seldom empty, and dinner-party followed dinner-party during the winter. We can only cast a backward glance upon these bygone recreations. The number of guests never exceeded ten; their names were those of the friends of years: artists, professors, "Rab," certain genial divines, some humorous or melodious limb of the law, the confraternity of poets, and various "elect ladies" were on the inner list; but wanderers from the scientific world of London, like Pro-

fessor Huxley, or from over the water, men of other race and eke of other colour, gave the whet of occasional novelty. The cooking was of high repute. The dinner-hour had grown belated in Edinburgh. It had moved slowly round the household clock from twelve to four, where a generation manfully stayed its course; but now it bounded forward in half-hour leaps, and fixed itself for a time at six o'clock. There the Professor decreed that it should stop, and although it tottered on to bedtime in the idle west, he maintained his point in Hill Street. This gave him a long and fruitful evening. At eight o'clock the drawing-room was filled with visitors, chosen friends of the house, who sought its pleasant ingle. Amongst them were many young people, nieces and nephews, whom the atmosphere of varied talk braced into effort after higher culture. Ladies predominated, but they were such as were worthy of a majority. Miss Lucy Cumming, Miss Bird and her sister, Miss Chambers, Miss Amelia Paton, Miss Fanny Stoddart, represent but a tithe of the gifted circle whose members—cloaked and hooded—flitted along to Hill Street, on many a winter evening, to find warmth and welcome there. In the other room the Professor slept peacefully in his chair till the kettle boiled, and then in loose student's

robe and wide-brimmed hat, worn for his eyes' sake, he made his entry with a crackling discharge of quips and compliments for the tea-drinkers.

Nothing was more congenial to him than this interval of fireside laughter, and yet when it was over he returned to his work for two long hours, often to spend them in coaching a student too poor to pay for help and too zealous to escape his kind teacher's interest. At eleven o'clock he sat down to the piano, a practice with which he kept unbroken faith all the years of his maturer life. For half an hour he strummed with difficulty, searching the chords of old and new psalm-tunes, and patiently repeating the phrases, more often wrong than right, which he picked out of the keys. Sometimes a visitor with a soul for old Covenanting tunes helped him a little with her voice, but he was best pleased to hunt them out himself. Strange sounds assailed the ears of unwonted sleepers in the house, sounds which assorted with no known melody, until weeks of discord had gone by, when the chords would be marshalled into approaching order, and at prayers next morning the psalm or paraphrase would be sung to the newly captured air. He led the singing himself, and had ten or twelve favourite psalms.

There were blanks by this time in the circle of his relatives. Old Mr Blackie died in the summer of 1856 ; Mr Wyld of Gilston was gone, and now Mrs Wyld followed her husband. Mrs Blackie's sister, Miss Augusta Wyld, joined them in their Hill Street home, and made one of the family for some years.

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